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THE $100M PASTRY MAN

Pastry evangelist Pascal Rigo is putting a classic French twist on mass-produced food by filling Starbucks outlets in Ontario with his La Boulange pastries and sandwiches, starting March 3. After cutting a $100-million deal with the coffee chain, Rigo wants to dispel the notion that fast food is low in quality. Story, page 15. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

Leafs are as bad as they look

Hockey. After Toronto's 10th loss in a row, fans should know they will have to wait at least five years for agony to end

ADAM PROTEAU
toronto@metronews.ca

Despite a decent showing Tuesday night in a 4-3 loss to the Nashville Predators, one of the NHL's top teams, don't expect the lowly Toronto Maple Leafs to rise from the doldrums any time soon.

The Leafs' years under certifiable crackpot owner Harold Ballard were brutal but that era began some 40 years ago. They also laboured for long stretches under numerous regimes that followed, under former GMs including John Ferguson Jr., Ken Dryden and Brian Burke.

But after their lowest-scoring month in team history (16 goals in 13 games), a 1-10-1 record in January and with little hope of the misery ending anytime soon, there's no doubt about it: this is rock bottom for modern-day Buds fans.

It's not just that Toronto won't make the playoffs — the ninth time in the past 10 years they won't be playing in the post-season — and it's not just that they can barely score, let alone scratch out a win lately.

What's most wearying at this stage is knowing how much work is ahead. Team president Brendan Shanahan and his management group will dismantle the team's core of talent, both before the March 2 NHL trade deadline and in the off-season, when deals are easier to make.

Veterans such as Dion Phaneuf, Phil Kessel, Joffrey Lupul and Cody Franson will be shopped around, and many — if not all — will move on. Youngsters will replace them, and there will be ugly growing pains and bumps in the road, as there is for every inexperienced squad.

If there's any fault to assign for the miserable state of things, the bulk shouldn't go to Toronto's players, who have been overvalued and placed into roles for which they're not a fit. The blame falls squarely on Leafs management for not building the team in a time-proven way: slowly and through the draft. Instead, they preferred to utilize trades and free agency to vault them into Stanley Cup contention, and it hasn't worked. Kessel, Phaneuf, Lupul and David Clarkson haven't led them anywhere. The core has failed.

Because of that fatal flaw, Leafs fans are facing at least five more seasons before their team can be built through drafting and development into a bona fide, year-in, year-out Cup frontrunner. And that stark reality hurts more than any slapshot to the soft spots.

Now, Leafs fans shouldn't throw up their hands, clamp their eyes shut and rock back and forth awaiting a miracle. Shanahan has been with the team less than a year and he's been meticulous in taking stock of the franchise. There are assets to be built upon. The big picture isn't utterly horrific.

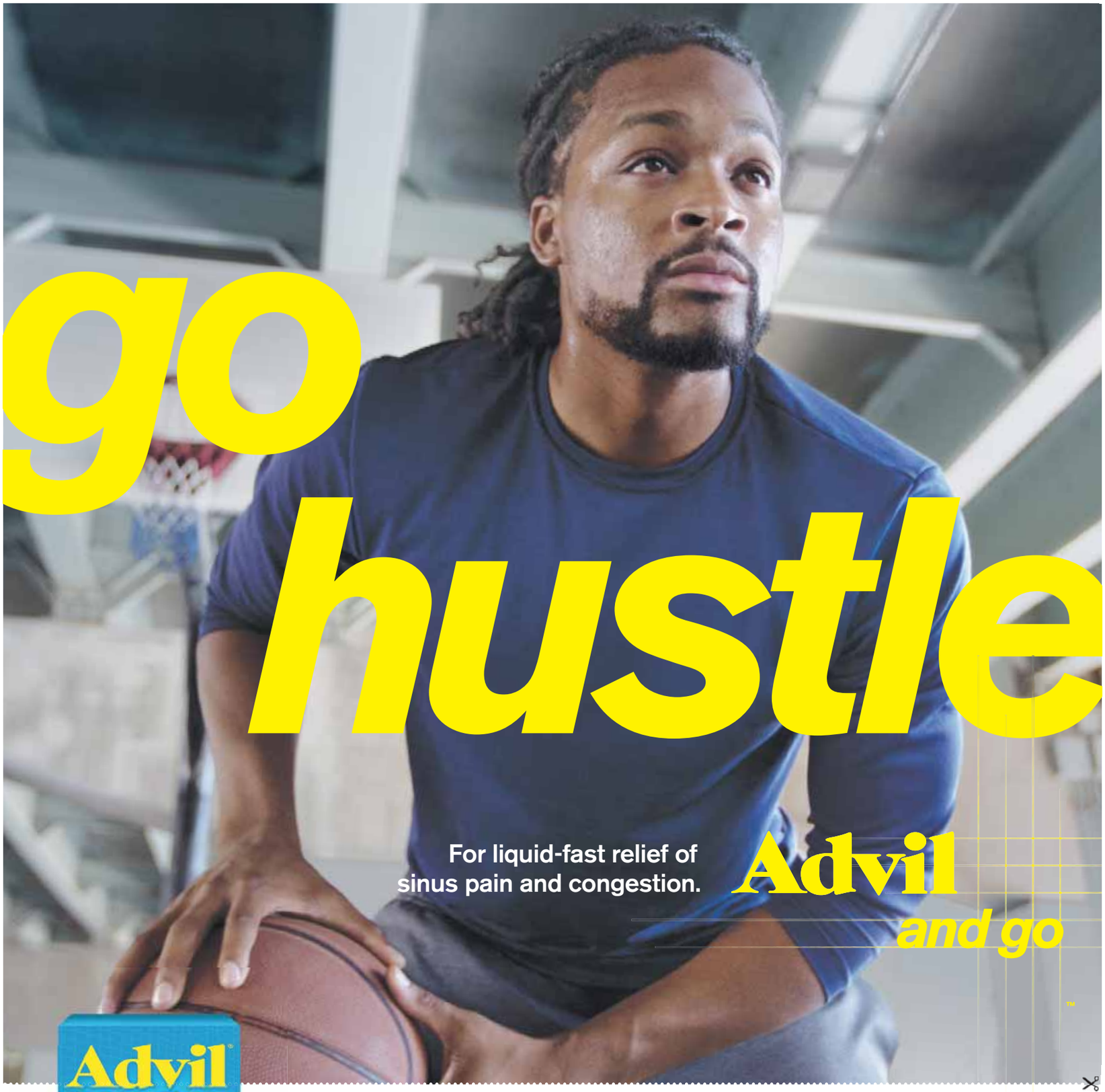
However, to deny how painful it is being a Leafs fan at the moment is to willingly delude yourself. It is awful. It does stink.

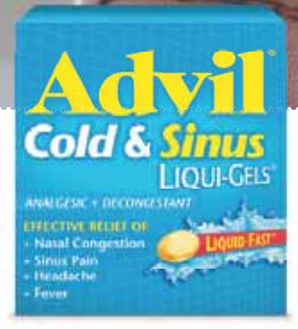
And it's going to be agonizing for the foreseeable future.

Scout grows up
Harper Lee's sequel
PAGE 18

The return of measles
The disease is back
PAGE 12

Death and intrigue
Argentina allegations
PAGE 14





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12926767

TTC yanks 'phallic' sign

Transit. Sign was first erected at Downsview Station in December

LUKE SIMCOE
luke.simcoe@metronews.ca

A TTC map showing the ins and outs of Downsview Station was taken down Tuesday after it got a rise out of riders.

It looked like a penis, and TTC spokesman Brad Ross issued an apology to "anyone who may have been offended by the phallic shape of the map."

The sign had been on display at Downsview since December, but problems with it were brought to the transit commission's attention earlier this week, Ross said. Apparently no one, including TTC managers and staff, had noticed its suggestive nature.

In a bid to speed up signage changes at Downsview, the map skipped the TTC's usual approval process.

"I honestly can't speak to why that particular design wasn't picked up," Ross said. "But had we reviewed it, we would have caught it and made some changes."

A new sign will be installed as soon as possible, Ross said, and the new design will be "less likely to raise eyebrows."

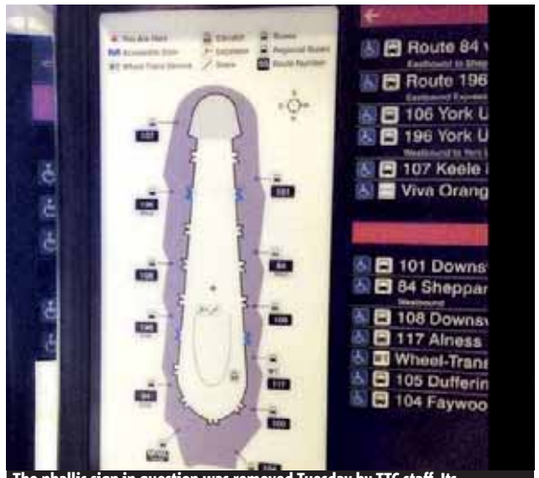
Photos of the station map were making the rounds on social media Tuesday, where users were baffled by the blunder.

"Seriously. I instantly thought, 'That's a penis' when I saw this," one person wrote on Reddit.

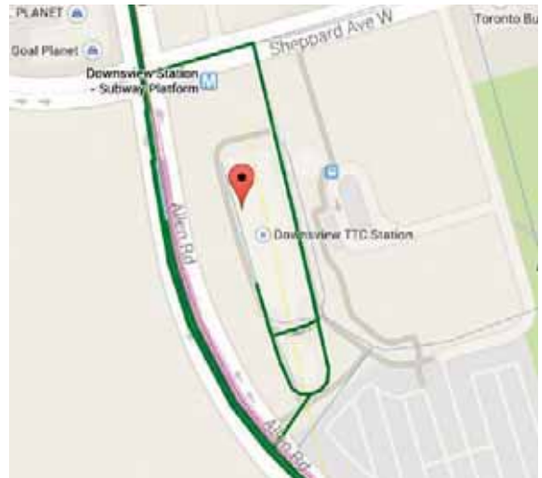
Others joked the sign would be more appropriate at Coxwell Station.

In the TTC's defence, Downsview Station is uniquely shaped, making it difficult to draw a map of the building without risking indecency.

In fact, you can't even get directions to the transit hub on Google Maps without being subjected to phallic symbolism.



The phallic sign in question was removed Tuesday by TTC staff. Its replacement will be "less likely to raise eyebrows," TTC spokesman Brad Ross said. REDDIT



Even Google Maps seems in on the joke in this outline of Downsview Station. GOOGLE MAPS SCREENSHOT

Ryerson's hands tied over cop-killing posts

Ryerson University officials say there's nothing they can do about a student politician who applauded the killing of police officers on his social media accounts.

The university sought legal advice on how to deal with comments made by Zidane Mohamed, a candidate in next week's student union election, but found its hands are tied.

"Cops got killed? Good. It's a false flag operation resulting in cops dying? Good. #Brooklyn," Mohamed tweeted on Dec. 20, the day NYPD Officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos were shot and killed in their patrol car in Brooklyn.

On Dec. 25, he posted on Facebook: "Is it bad of me that I applaud the killing of the two cops in NYC?"

The comments became controversial last week after Ryerson's student newspaper published screenshots of the posts.

Michael Forbes, the university's manager of media relations, said "unfortunately" there's nothing the school can do about the comments.

"The comments are absolutely abhorrent," he said. "But we sought legal advice and found that it's neither a hate crime nor a violation of the Human Rights Code, so there's no action we can take."

The situation is different from the now-infamous Dalhousie dentistry affair, because the offensive statements in that case were made against women and, because of that, violated human rights legislation, Forbes said.

Const. Victor Kwong, a spokesman for the Toronto Police Service, said no one reported Mohamed's comments to police.

Even if they had, police wouldn't have taken action because the comments didn't incite killing or violence, he said. JESSICA SMITH CROSS/METRO

Zidane Mohamed COURTESY EMMA DILLABOUGH AND THE RYERSONIAN

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Between 2001 and 2010, New York's Metropolitan Transit Authority tossed more than 700 subway cars into the ocean to form an artificial reef off the coast of Delaware. COURTESY OF STEPHEN MALLON AND FRONT ROOM GALLERY

What to do with old streetcars ...

TTC. Prof says they could be turned into food stands or even bus shelters

LUKE SIMCOE
luke.simcoe@metronews.ca

As the TTC gets set to phase out its aging streetcar and subway fleet, some in Toronto are wondering if the old vehicles should be sent to the playground rather than the scrap yard.

Cities like London and Beijing have converted public transit cars into everything from artist squats to temporary homeless shelters, but the TTC still sells most of its decommissioned vehicles for scrap.

As the previous generation of subway cars and streetcars reach the end of their 30-year lifespan, they will be stripped of spare parts, drained of fluid and sold to the highest bidder — typically fetching about $10,000 per vehicle.

Quoted

"It's about creating a mindset where we don't create waste."

Mark Gorgolewski, Ryerson University professor, on the concept of "upcycling"

Compare that to New York, where the Metropolitan Transit Authority has used old cars to form an artificial reef in the Atlantic Ocean. Named after the Redbird subway trains which comprise it, the reef has helped restore the marine ecosystem off the coast of Delaware.

While throwing hundreds of TTC trains into Lake Ontario may not be feasible — or even useful — Ryerson University architecture professor Mark Gorgolewski believes the TTC could be doing more to "upcycle" old vehicles.

"All over the world, shipping containers or old railway cars are being used as small pods for different activities," he said. "It would be nice to see some of these initiatives in Toronto."

Gorgolewski suggested old streetcars could be turned into food stands, or even playground equipment.

"Maybe you could re-purpose a TTC vehicle into a bus shelter," he said. "That way they're close to their original use."

The TTC could also find buyers willing to refurbish old trains or streetcars, Gorgolewski said, something the transit agency did in 2011, sending 255 subway cars to Nigeria.

"What we find is the closer you can reuse a material to its original function, the more likely you are to realize environmental benefits," said Gorgolewski.

While he encouraged the TTC to think outside the box when it comes to re-purposing, Gorgolewski was quick to point out that scrapping vehicles can often make environmental sense.

"It may be most beneficial to recycle the steel into new steel because it saves a lot of energy," he said.

School board bosses face pay cut

The director of education and a number of senior staff at the Toronto school board whose salaries don't comply with a public sector wage freeze will see their pay cut starting next week.

And trustees will see their expense accounts knocked back to either $9,000 each or equal to their Catholic counterparts at $11,780 — down from $27,000 — under plans that still have to be approved at a full board meeting before a Feb. 13 deadline imposed by Ontario's minister of education.

Liz Sandals gave the board 13 directives it must comply with by Feb. 13, and trustees at a committee meeting Tuesday were provided with progress that has been made so far on each one. "Staff have been working around the clock" and trustees have come in on weekends to deal with the matter, said board chairman Shaun Chen.

Meanwhile, before the meeting, Chen responded to a letter sent by Mayor John Tory asking that the city be included in discussions on school closings and the subsequent sale of public land. Chen has called for a roundtable that includes Tory and Sandals to discuss ways to figure out what to do with half-empty schools the province is pressuring the TDSB to sell. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Shaun Chen with TDSB director Donna Quan TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Synesthetes Greg Jarvis, from left, George (who asked that his real name not be published), and Jakub Hladik experience Toronto transit very differently than most other commuters. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

A new way to see subways

The sounds of Toronto's subway system, from bustling trains to chatty commuters, are music to Greg Jarvis' ears — and his eyes.

"It's like a big grey swoosh," Jarvis says, as a westbound train enters Christie Station. "But there's so many sounds within it. Even the clatter of the wheels add a bunch of bumps to what I see.... And if the brakes squeal, it adds a streak of electric white to the mix."

Jarvis has synesthesia, a rare neurological condition which links his senses together. In his case, he sees sounds.

"Anything I'm listening to, I'm looking at it," he said.

Metro rode the rocket with Jarvis and two other synesthetes to understand how their condition can turn one of the most common experiences in Toronto into something unique.

George, who asked that his real name not be published, is one of only two people in the world known to have acquired synesthesia. He had a stroke seven years ago which re-wired his senses.

"I used to get really bored riding the subway," he said. "But now I just turn on the synesthesia and it's much more interesting."

Unlike Jarvis, George's condition spans multiple senses. The way his fellow passengers look invokes certain smells, while the colours of the station tiles can summon different tastes.

"I can feel peanut butter right now. Don't know why," he says suddenly, halfway between High Park and Keele stations.

Jakub Hladik has chromesthesia, a condition similar to Jarvis' but more closely linked to colour. The notes which herald the closing of the subway doors, for example, bring on a sudden rush of yellow.

"I've lived here for over two years, but the novelty of riding the subway has never worn off," he said. "There's just so many interesting sounds."

The trio met through the Canadian Synesthesia Association, which Jarvis started. The organization hosts monthly meetups for synesthetes and works to counter misinformation about their condition.

"There's this idea that synesthesia is a hindrance," Jarvis said. "We're not overwhelmed by the world we're in. If anything, it's an enhancement."

LUKE SIMCOE/METRO

A 'creative advantage?'

Both Jarvis and Hladik work as musicians and producers, and say their synesthesia is a creative boon.

"I can't imagine working on music without being able to see it," Hladik said.

"It helps me to understand music," echoed Jarvis. "It's like I'm seeing all of Beethoven's architecture in front of me as the symphony unfolds."

It's not just music. Notable synesthetes include author Vladimir Nabokov and painter David Hockney, as well as composers like Pharrell Williams and Duke Ellington.

Tax lawyer has serious legal woes of his own

Law. Overdrawn accounts, a costly divorce, have the lawyer arguing his own case on several fronts

"I don't cheat, I change the game."

That's a claim made in a recent radio ad by Canada's self-styled tax fighter Philippe DioGuardi, who with his father and law partner, Paul, presents a unified force against the "wolves" of the Canada Revenue Agency.

A Torstar News Service investigation reveals Philippe has been fighting his own battles on four fronts: Paul says Philippe over-drew $2 million from their firm; his estranged wife wants spousal support of $25,000 a month; Ontario's legal regulator is investigating nine complaints against him; and the tax lawyer has only recently settled his own $147,000 debt to the CRA.

DioGuardi, who says he has helped more than 8,500 clients over his career, traces some of his woes to the "lavish lifestyle" of the woman he met and married in Russia in 2003. DioGuardi's affidavit filed in his divorce proceedings says wife Elena DioGuardi's lifestyle included "countless plastic surgeries," jewelry, luxury vehicles, fur coats and trips abroad.

He also claims that Elena had been married twice before, including to a wealthy 70-year-old Californian whom she met through her profile on multiple "Russian bride" solicitation websites.

In an interview with Torstar, Elena DioGuardi took exception to her husband's claims.

"He's saying I'm a mail-order bride, and I'm going to say absolutely a different story," said Elena, whose Facebook page includes numerous revealing glamour shots of herself. "He's going to do anything or say anything just to make me feel bad or make me look stupid in front of the judge."

Philippe DioGaurdi TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Court action

The DioGuardis have launched a court action against the law society to prevent the regulator from releasing any information to the public about the complaints without first obtaining a written waiver from each complainant.

Philippe DioGuardi has built his high-octane career as an "adversarial" tax lawyer through a slick multi-million-dollar, multimedia ad campaign, in which CRA officers are portrayed as shady characters in dark sunglasses. One commercial, posted on YouTube, features a tax agent being shot with paintballs in the face and chest, while a voiceover says, "At the first sign of tax trouble, fire back."

On the DioGuardi law firm's Facebook page, another ad features DioGuardi in a suit and slicked-back hair and proclaims simply: "Tax problems end here."

A recent DioGuardi radio ad says the CRA plays "Mr. Nice Guy to get details about your bank account and your house, and then sends in the wolves to seize your money and your assets."

Some details of DioGuardi's financial problems are contained in divorce proceedings ongoing in a Toronto court. Philippe and Elena DioGuardi began divorce proceedings in 2012. Both sides have provided information that is now in the public domain.

Financial documents submitted by DioGuardi show that between the years 2009 and 2012, the firm had annual revenues of about $6 million, and spent about $2 million a year on advertising and marketing.

By 2012, DioGuardi's overdrawing from his law firm account and marital problems prompted his father to characterize the situation as a "crisis." The elder DioGuardi was forced to come out of retirement to take control of the firm they founded more than 10 years ago, change the signing authorities over the firm's bank accounts, and put his son on a strict budget.

And while DioGuardi claims in his affidavit that his wife has a "very violent temper," Elena says in her court filings that she had to hire a bodyguard and driver after receiving threats from one of DioGuardi's three children. She also says her marriage began to disintegrate because DioGuardi "started a relationship with a woman who worked for him" around the same time he married Elena.

In his court filings, DioGuardi denies the allegation.

Huge discrepancies exist in the claims Philippe and Elena make as to the value of property in each other's possession.

Philippe claims in court documents that his wife's fur coat collection is worth more than $200,000. Elena claims some of the coats were fake fur purchased from Russian websites, and puts the value of the collection at only $7,000.

Philippe claims in his court filing that he's gone to painstaking lengths to accommodate Elena's repeated demands for disclosure of his financial records.

"I am a tax lawyer practising for 24 years now, and I take my responsibilities as 'an officer of the court' very seriously," DioGuardi says in his affidavit. "Unfortunately, however, signing and swearing to the truth of the contents in an affidavit, or any other document means absolutely nothing to Elena."

DioGuardi stated in the documents that he was "quite astonished by the degree of corruption and skewed attitudes towards truth and honesty" in Russian society. The remark drew a sharp rebuke from Elena's lawyers, who said DioGuardi was relying on "ethnic slurs against Russians to substantiate his claims."

The divorce case is ongoing.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Elena DioGuardi as she appears in photos posted on her Facebook page. Elena is suing Philippe DioGaurdi for spousal support. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

"He's saying I'm a mail-order bride, and I'm going to say absolutely a different story." Elena DioGuardi

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T.O. teen's cover of All of Me testament to beating the odds

Web sensation. Tweet from Ashton Kutcher drives hits

When Madison Tevlin's parents uploaded to Facebook a video of their daughter belting out John Legend's All of Me, they expected it to reach friends and family, nothing more.

But the passionate performance delivered by 13-year-old Madison, who was born with Down syndrome, has touched a lot of people. The video went viral — its success accelerated by a tweet from Ashton Kutcher — and has been watched more than four million times.

Madison, who has been working with a vocal coach for more than a year and trains once a week, is beating the odds against those with Down syndrome, who have an especially hard time singing because of low muscle tone, as well as issues with short-term and long-term memory, explains her father, Matthew.

When Madison's vocal coach offered her a chance to record a video of her singing, All of Me was an obvious choice. The final recording came after months of preparation and practice, says Madison's mom, Grace.

"We practised until I knew the song by heart," Madison says, adding that the song means a lot to her.

"All I think when I sing, I think about my family," she says.

The video quickly exploded after Matthew uploaded it for friends and family to watch. After a few days, he was shocked to see the view count was climbing by 50,000 an hour. It's a number that makes Madison particularly proud.

Most of the comments have been overwhelmingly positive and heartwarming; it appears Madison has touched and inspired other families of children with special needs to "go out and do more for their children, because there are no bounds," Matthew says.

The video has also attracted a few negative comments, however, which reveal to Matthew and Grace just how important it is "to reach out and dispel these myths out there about the limitations of people with special needs."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

"I want them to know that if you believe in yourself, you should do this."

Madison Tevlin

Toronto's Madison Tevlin is a young singer whose cover of John Legend's All of Me is going viral on YouTube. The passionate performance delivered by 13-year-old Madison has touched a lot of people. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Crime

Toronto men charged in 'roof-topping' incident

Three Toronto men have been charged after police said they broke into the observation deck of a downtown highrise to take photos of themselves.

Police allege the men broke the lock to gain access to the rooftop observation deck of a building on Monday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Shutting down

Wrigley to close T.O. gum factory

Wrigley Canada is closing its Toronto gum factory next year, putting 383 people out of work. The company says the plant will be shut down in March 2016. Wrigley says those affected will be offered severance packages, career transition support and paid time to attend other job interviews and counselling.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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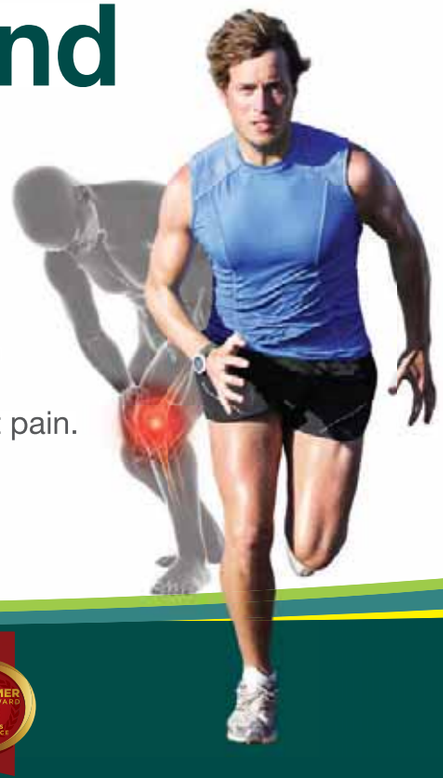

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Wearing their hearts on their shirts: Campaign encourages acts of kindness

Dozens of do-gooders, many wearing pink T-shirts, gathered at Huron Heights Secondary School in a rally to show support for the kindness campaign Tuesday. They've signed up for a 30-day campaign called "Say My Name Canada," challenging all Canadians to perform acts of kindness in a bid to stop bullying. The campaign will culminate in the Feb. 25 video release of a song by the Glenn Marais Band, Say My Name, written for a friend's son who was bullied. Feb. 25 is Pink Shirt Day.

CARLOS OSORIO/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Law schools lagging on domestic violence

Education. Lack of training for Ontario students putting victims at risk, advisory bodies and advocates say

Ontario law schools were told to make domestic violence a compulsory part of their curriculum by 2015, but a Torstar News Service analysis has found only two schools in the province have carried this out.

Unlike America, most Ontario law schools have snubbed recommendations to implement mandatory domestic violence education for more than a decade and the inadequate training of students is putting victims at risk, advocates and the advisory bodies who made the recommendations say.

In 2011, after reviewing numerous domestic homicides where victims had been given poor — even deadly — legal advice, the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee called for the topic to be included in compulsory first-year ethics and professional responsibility courses at law schools by 2015.

On the heels of that recommendation, the Law Commission of Ontario created domestic violence teaching modules to help law schools easily roll out the change.

"To my knowledge, no one actually took up the suggestions we made," Dr. Patricia Hughes, executive director of the law commission, told Torstar.

"Is it good enough? No, of course not," she said. "I do believe strongly in the need to address this."

Dr. William Lucas, chairman of the death review committee, said Ontario family lawyers have a "terrible lack of understanding of domestic violence issues." This is a problem the committee has raised repeatedly since the early 2000s, he said.

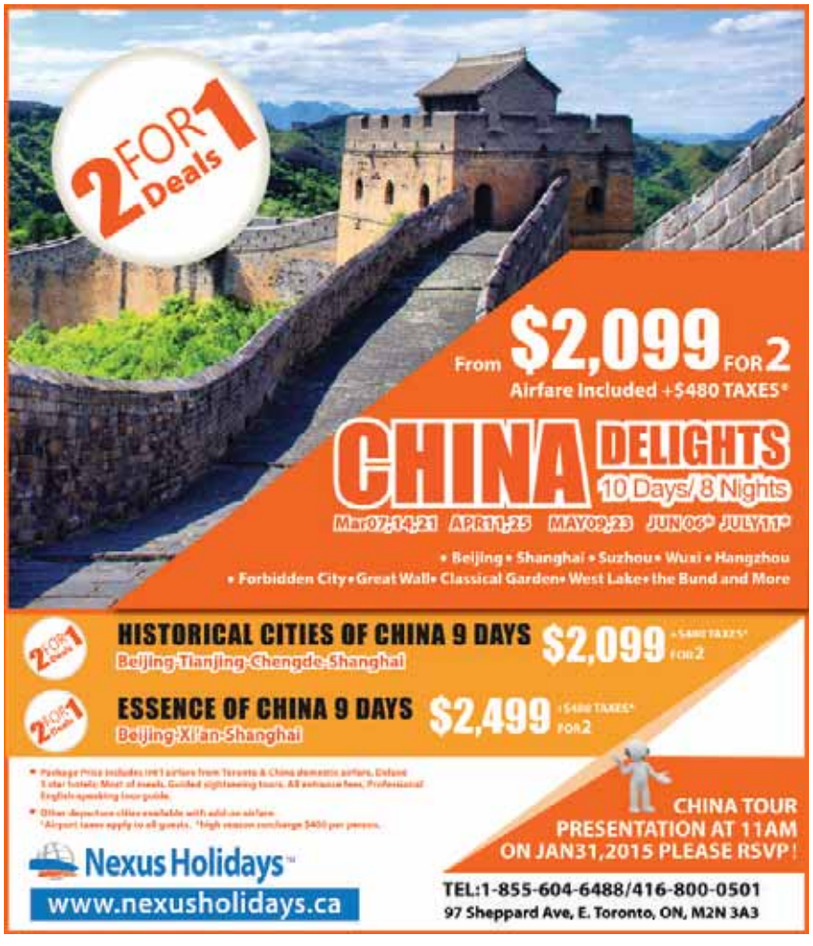
Lawyers often see victims of domestic violence at crisis times and they have a unique opportunity to connect their clients with social agencies to potentially save their lives, the law commission's report says. Without training, lawyers could miss the warning signs of domestic violence or offer legal advice that could place their client in further danger.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Curriculum

Law schools are independent entities and the Law Society of Upper Canada has no authority to dictate their curriculum, a society spokesperson said.

- After contacting Ontario's seven law schools, Torstar found only two — the University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Law and Lakehead University's Bora Laskin Faculty of Law — have actually done what was asked.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RCMP arrest Peshdary on terrorism charges

National security. Peshdary was previously swept up in a separate probe in August 2010

Chief Superintendent Jennifer Strachan Criminal Operations Officer RCMP O Division announces during a news conference in Ottawa on Tuesday that the RCMP have laid terror charges against three people. THE CANADIAN PRESS

The RCMP have arrested Awso Peshdary, 25, and charged him with a number of terrorism-related offences including conspiring with John Maguire, a former University of Ottawa student who made headlines with a video supporting ISIL and warning of, and encouraging, further attacks on Canada.

Peshdary is in police custody, faces four charges and is expected to appear in a bail court in Ottawa on Wednesday. He is facing charges of participating in, conspiring to participate in and facilitating the activity of a terrorist group.

Khadar Khalib, 23, who is also believed to be overseas, is charged with leaving Canada to participate in, counselling a person to participate in and conspiring to participate, or to contribute in an activity of a terrorist group.

"These charges speak to our ability to tackle a threat that is multifaceted and constantly evolving," assistant RCMP commissioner James Malizia said in a statement.

"Through collaborative efforts with our partners, we were able to disrupt an organized network associated with (ISIL). This network was involved in recruiting individuals for terrorism purposes and in sending them into Syria and Iraq for the benefit of this terrorist group."

News of Peshdary's arrest was released at a news conference in Ottawa Tuesday afternoon.

LUCY HAINES/METRO IN OTTAWA, WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS AND TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Health

Measles virus makes a return

Between the Disneyland outbreak and this week's revelation that measles has popped up in Toronto, a virus that Canada and the United States wiped out over a decade ago is firmly back in the news. The measles virus has not circulated in either country since the late 1990s.

When the virus is detected it means it's been imported — by a resident who contracts measles while travelling, or an infected person visiting the country. Then the highly contagious virus can spread among those who are not immunized.

Why are children and adults still coming down with a nasty disease that can progress to pneumonia, trigger brain damage or deafness, and even death?

The fundamental answer is that some parents don't vaccinate their children. But what is really driving multi-case outbreaks is clustering, experts suggest.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Baird's exit creates hole at home

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird rises in the House of Commons Tuesday in Ottawa to announce he will step down from his position. Baird said he has no plans to run for re-election and will surrender his seat — he represents the Ottawa riding of Nepean — in the coming weeks. Trade Minister Ed Fast will stand in for Baird at Foreign Affairs.

ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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An Open Letter to Ontarians.

Getting the Facts Straight on Honey Bees

It's not every day that we, the 28,000 farm families in Ontario, ask for support from our fellow Ontarians. Then again, having newly proposed agricultural regulations threaten our ability to provide you with made-in-Ontario food, fibre and fuel isn't an everyday occurrence.

We're referring to Ontario's proposed restriction of a certain class of seed treatments, neonicotinoids, with the intention of "protecting" honey bees. ***The fact is, these regulations will not benefit honey bees,*** but they will strip farmers of a vital pest management tool.

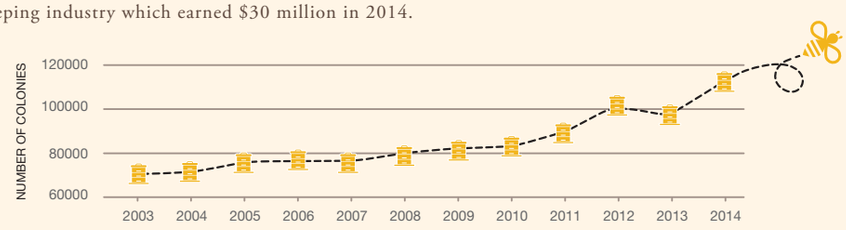
As farmers, we stand by our commitment to the environment – down to every acre of land, litre of fresh water and vital honey bee. It's why we're sharing the facts about honey bee health:

Honey bee colonies and honey production have increased, not decreased in Ontario

- Statistics Canada data demonstrates that in Ontario, honey bee colony numbers are up almost 60 per cent since 2003, when the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments were introduced. Honey production has increased by 29 per cent in the past year, and Ontario has a successful honey beekeeping industry which earned $30 million in 2014.

Ontario Bee Colonies are Growing

Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM Tables 001-0007



- Health Canada recently released a report indicating that, in 2014, the number of honey bee incidents reported during planting was down 70 per cent from 2013. And, of the late season issues reported, 72 per cent were made by only three beekeepers out of 3,262.

Neonicotinoids are used safely in Canada and around the world

- 85 per cent of Canadian honey is produced in western Canada where there are no known honey bee colony health issues resulting from neonicotinoid seed treatment use.
- Other countries, including England and Australia, that rely on science-based regulatory systems have concluded that any risk to honey bee populations from neonicotinoids is low and manageable.
- Here in Ontario, real-world field level research consistently demonstrates that responsible use of neonicotinoid seed treatments does not result in honey bee colony health issues.

The fact is most bee experts agree that the ***top health issues for honey bees are parasites, diseases, inadequate nutrition, adverse weather and hive management practices.***

Bees matter to agriculture. Bees matter to all of us. That's why we have worked diligently to enhance our production practices, adopt new technologies to reduce risk, and championed best management practices of the products needed to support agricultural production.

As stewards of the land, we care deeply about the environment. We have, and will continue to promote honey bee health, but we ask Ontarians to stand with us in demanding that decisions impacting our food, fibre and fuel supply be made with sound science and facts.

Please support Ontario farm families by spreading awareness of this important issue, because #BeesMatter to everyone.

For more information, please visit: **BeesMatter.ca**

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and supported by the agricultural industry

Argentina. Dead man asked for president to be arrested

Investigators examining the death of a prosecutor who accused Argentine President Cristina Fernandez of agreeing to shield the alleged masterminds of a 1994 terror bombing said Tuesday they have found a draft document he wrote requesting her arrest.

Chief investigator Viviana Fein said the draft detention request was found in a trash bin of the apartment where Alberto Nisman's body was discovered on Jan. 18. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cristina Fernandez. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Two prisoners executed in Jordan after ISIL kills pilot

Middle East. A government spokesman said Sajida al-Rishawi and Ziad al-Karbouli had been put to death

Anwar al-Tarawneh, centre, the wife of Jordanian pilot, Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, holds a poster of him. An online video that bears the logo of the militant group's media service purportedly shows the pilot being killed. RAAD ADAYLE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Jordanian government spokesman says Jordan has executed two prisoners, including a would-be female suicide bomber from al-Qaida.

The executions Wednesday came just hours after militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) released a video purportedly showing a captured Jordanian fighter pilot being burned alive in a cage.

Jordan had vowed a swift and lethal response.

Government spokesman Mohammed al-Momani said that two prisoners, Sajida al-Rishawi and Ziad al-Karbouli, were executed Wednesday.

Jordan's military earlier confirmed the death of Lt. Muath Al-Kaseasbeh, 26, who was captured by the extremists in December when his F-16 crashed while he was flying a mission as part of the U.S.-led air campaign against ISIL.

In the past week, the militants had not responded to demands by Jordanian authorities to deliver proof the airman was alive so a prisoner swap could be made.

The killing of the 26-pilot appeared aimed at pressuring the government of Jordan — a close U.S. ally — to leave the coalition that has carried out months of airstrikes targeting ISIL positions in Syria and Iraq.

King Abdullah II broadcast a speech on Jordanian TV on Tuesday evening, confirming the pilot's death "with sorrow and anger," and urging his countrymen to unite.

"Our punishment and revenge will be as huge as the loss of the Jordanians," said the spokesman of the armed forces, Mamdouh al-Ameri. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Executions

Al-Rishawi, 44, faced death by hanging for her role in triple Amman hotel bombings in 2005. Her suicide belt did not detonate at the time and she fled the scene, but was quickly arrested. After a televised confession, she recanted, but her appeal was turned down.

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French pastry chef touts 'essence of the product'

Pascal Rigo talks with Metro News about his new venture with coffee giant Starbucks. Rigo's food aims to marry quality ingredients and mass production, with authenticity as the goal.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
Metro in Toronto

Meet Pascal Rigo: The pastry evangelist who's coming to Canada determined to put a classic French twist on mass-produced food.

A man of gusto and expressive hand gestures, Rigo will be filling Starbucks stores in Ontario and British Columbia with his La Boulange French pastries and sandwiches, starting March 3. The rest of the country will see his croissants in cafés by July.

He wants to disprove the common theory that fast food is low in quality. He likes the words "pure" and "simple" and fawns particularly over his ingredients.

In a $100-million deal, Rigo has gone from serving 16,000 people at 20 San Francisco cafés to entering the lives of 45-million people a week after his company was bought by Starbucks in 2012.

"What can we do that's really, really good, and how can we share it with as many people as possible?" he said, with boundless energy in his voice and his eyebrows up to his hairline.

The solution, he said, was found in freezers.

His croissants, danishes and scones — already available in U.S. stores — are frozen the moment they come out of industrial ovens, individually wrapped and put in cartridges for transport and storage until they're sold.

"We capture the essence of the product at the end of baking and we seal it," he said.

Rigo hesitated to criticize the current Starbucks pastry lineup, but he did note that compared to his creation, the existing croissant "just doesn't smell like butter."

Starbucks has made a "substantial investment" by putting freezers in all of its cafés to store the pastries, a spokesperson said.

The pastries take 15 seconds to warm up ("and wake up the butter") — about the time it takes to make a latte — and sell for a slightly higher price than the current product line, averaging about $2.45.

Pascal Rigo DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

As for the prospect of competing with Tim Hortons, Rigo seemed unperturbed.

"I was not sure how nice the baby will look," he quipped of the recent merger between Tim Hortons and Burger King.

The corner bakery and French grandmothers are his real competition, he said.

To pull it off, he's building a network of smaller producers — blueberries from B.C., California almonds and Oregano peppermint, eschewing another well-held notion that local is best.

"It could be local and crap," he said in characteristic French frankness.

Starbucks won't be offering all the same products in every store, either. It's selling pastrami sandwiches in New York City and goat cheese-and-zucchini croissants in San Francisco.

Not even all croissants will taste the same coast to coast, Rigo said, warning that perfection isn't the goal — authenticity is.

All that, from a man also keen to push the idea that mechanization is not innately bad, even for a foodie.

"The machine is fine, it's what you feed the machine with," he said.

In a world where prepacked and processed foods reign, it's a big mission for a man who began baking as a child in the small village of Paillet, France, before moving to the U.S., building a popular café franchise, and selling it to the biggest name in coffee for many millions.

"I asked for way more than that," he said, and laughed. "You've got to start high."

The French bakers he learned from would no doubt agree: Rigo's artisan-for-all mission is a lofty one.

Quoted

"There are good cronuts and bad cronuts. I think you can invent everything in the world, but you have to start somewhere, and for us it's the ingredients."

Pascal Rigo, when asked about the value of pastry trends.

Anatomy of a pastry favourite

Chocolate croissant

Choosing a favourite is no easy feat

Asking Pascal Rigo to choose which pastry you should try first is like asking him to "choose between my children," he said.

But when pushed, the chocolate croissant won.

"It's an amazing chocolate croissant," he said. "The crunchiness of the butter flavour, or how warm it is, it's the authenticity."

All about chocolate

"When you eat it, think about the single-origin chocolate from Colombia, how it travelled and how those two things met together." Pascal Rigo

Layers of butter

24

The croissant has the flaky structure that comes from the proper 24 layers of all-butter dough and is baked to a golden-brown colour, Rigo noted.

Coffee or tea

Pair it with a drink

When it comes to pairing the chocolate croissant with a beverage, Rigo suggests Caffé Verona, Guatemala Antigua, Espresso Roast, Ethiopia or a Teavana Shaken Iced Black Tea.

DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

Appeal to women

Menus to feature wine, beer and tapas

Starbucks baristas: Make room for bartenders — and a carbonation station for teas and juices.

An evening menu of wine, beer and tapas will be launched at the coffee chain's locations in Canada's big cities by the end of the year, Starbucks Canada president Rossann Williams told Torstar News Service.

She said the company's aim is to appeal to women, who make up 60 per cent of Starbucks' customers and don't necessarily like to hang out in bars with their friends.

With coffee sales flat, the 44-year-old java giant is pushing into different areas as it faces stiff competition from fast-food chains serving coffee along with independent coffee chains popping up everywhere.

Williams said she expects new food options from French pastry chef Pascal Rigo, in particular, to be a big driver of sales and traffic for the chain.

"Millennial customers like quality," said Williams, who said her aim is to attract the next generation. "They have to make big changes, just like Tim Hortons did six or seven years ago when it started expanding its food menu," said Robert Carter, executive director of food service at NPD Group.

He said with fast-food restaurant growth projected to slow down growth to one per cent over the next five years in Canada, there is "real room for Starbucks to steal customers" from Tims especially, which has a dominant 42-per-cent market share in fast food. Starbucks is stuck in fifth place in the so-called quick service restaurant business, he noted. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Rossann Williams, new president of Starbucks Canada
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Gossip

NED EHRBAR

METRO'S TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Lindsay Lohan ALL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

Lohans sue Fox for crack about Dina doing coke with Lilo

Be careful what you say about Lindsay Lohan, because apparently the perennially troubled actress is looking to keep her lawyers busy with something other than her probation hearings.

Lohan and her mother, Dina, are suing Fox News, Sean Hannity, and Michelle Fields for comments made during a Hannity episode exactly a year ago about the mother-daughter duo doing cocaine together, according to TMZ.

Their main complaint is that while Fox issued an apology, the video clip in question — from a segment about stars who could suffer similar fates to Philip Seymour Hoffman, in which Fields states, "Lindsay's mom is doing cocaine with her" — was not removed from the web, despite a request that Fox do so.

It's tough to decide who to root for in this one.

Ryan Guzman

Boy Next Door Guzman's naked ambition on display

Sure The Boy Next Door did some respectable business at the box office, but if you're the non-J.Lo star of the film, your first concern should be keeping that fame game momentum going, right?

And Ryan Guzman knows just how to do that: Get naked.

The young actor posed nude — save for some carefully draped sheets — for Cosmopolitan U.K.'s March issue to raise awareness for Cancer Research U.K., because sure.

And just to make sure you feel weird about any dirty thoughts, he peppers the spread with some personal tragedy: "I lost my grandfather to cancer when I was 13," Guzman tells the magazine. "It's affected my life and I'll do everything I can to back cancer research." And he does apparently mean everything.

Mila Kunis weighs in on her really big baby girl

Mila Kunis is making the talk-show rounds for the first time since giving birth to daughter Wyatt four months ago — and apparently Wyatt was quite the whopper.

"She's a really good baby. She was 9.5 pounds when she was born," Kunis tells Ellen DeGeneres during an interview. "Because she was so big, she was a like a hearty little thing."

That is putting it lightly. And apparently having a baby that big can throw off your planning. "Newborn never happened. Newborn diapers never happened and newborn clothes never happened," Kunis explains.

Mila Kunis

"She's four months old and wears six-month clothing, six to nine. She's a big girl, y'all." Sure, fine, but when did Kunis start saying "y'all"?

Robin Williams and his wife Susan Schneider

Robin's widow and his kids go to court over estate

Efforts to settle Robin Williams' estate are getting messy, as his wife, Susan Schneider, is suing the late comedian's three children from previous marriages for removing items from the home she and Williams shared without her permission. But Williams' kids are countersuing, claiming Schneider is "adding insult to a terrible injury," according to the Associated Press. "The Williams children are heartbroken that (Schneider), Mr. Williams' wife of less than three years, has acted against his wishes by challenging the plans so carefully made for his estate," their attorney says in the filing.

Neil Patrick Harris swears he's ready to host Oscars

If Oscars host Neil Patrick Harris' first appearance related to the gig — popping up at this week's annual nominees luncheon — is any indication, profanity is on the table for the Feb. 22 awards ceremony.

"Some of you are good friends and some of you I just got a chance to meet for the first time, but we are all going to be spending Oscar night together, where everything will be hilarious," he said, addressing the luncheon before pulling out a spiral toy to hypnotize the nominees in attendance, intoning, "Everything will be hilarious. Everything will be f—ing hilarious."

Neil Patrick Harris

SCENE

U.S. networks stumbling toward diversity

Casting. Fifteen years after an outcry by civil rights groups, minority characters are still few and far between

Gina Rodriguez, centre, stars in the comedy series Jane the Virgin. "People say this (show) is too much of a risk," says Rodriguez. "Which is so sad, because it's the same story, just told by a new face." DANNY FELD/THE CW

Kenya Barris, creator of ABC's black-ish, was motivated to write the comedy about an African-American family's efforts to honour its heritage in part by the unreality of what he grew up watching on television.

"I saw Friends and Seinfeld and thought, 'What part of New York is this?'" recalled Barris, who is black. "It's not about being diverse. It's about being true to the world."

His show comes 15 years after civil rights groups, galvanized by a lineup of new network series almost entirely devoid of minority characters, sought and ultimately won agreements from major broadcasters to put programs on the air that better reflect the U.S. population.

An Associated Press analysis of regular cast members on prime-time comedies and dramas on ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox found progress since then in hiring black actors, but other minorities appear slighted. Casts at three of the four networks are still whiter than the nation as a whole.

That's in contrast to a fall 2014 season that seemed to signal broad change. Besides black-ish and a trio of shows from black megaproducer Shonda Rhimes, it offered Asian-American crime fighters and Latino families.

Among the key findings of the Associated Press analysis:

• ABC, NBC and Fox now have a higher percentage of blacks in prime time than in the general population — a significant change over 1999.

• The difference is most dramatic at Fox: 6.5 per cent of characters in lead or supporting roles were black in 1999 to 21 per cent black this past fall, a number that notched up again with January's premiere of Empire, a drama about an African-American family's music dynasty.

• Other ethnic groups don't do nearly as well. While Latinos are the largest minority group in the U.S. at more than 17 per cent of the population, only Fox and ABC have Latino representation of as much as 10 per cent.

• CBS, the nation's most popular network, had the most diversity 15 years ago and now has the least. CBS programs are whiter now than they were then.

Gina Rodriguez, the Golden Globe-winning star of the CW's new telenovela-inspired comedy Jane the Virgin, knows what it's like to be left out of the TV picture.

"Ten years ago, when I was looking at that screen and didn't see myself at all, I knew there was no place (for me). Or I was too out of the box, too much of a risk," she said. "People say this (show) is too much of a risk. ... Which is so sad, because it's the same story, just told by a new face."

In 1965, after NBC cast Bill Cosby in I Spy, young Kweisi Mfume's mother sent her son to knock on doors in their Baltimore neighbourhood to spread the word: "There's a coloured man on TV!" Cosby had become the first black to star on a network drama.

In 1999, as head of the NAACP, Mfume was among the leaders pressuring networks on diversity.

"One can make the argument it's been progress over 15 years, but it's still been 15 years and that's a lot of time to go by to see some of these changes incrementally," said Mfume.

In this 1977 photo, Jimmie Walker, left, appears with co-star Janet Jackson in an episode of Good Times. In the 1970s, Norman Lear was unveiling a slate of hit sitcoms that addressed hot-button issues of the day, particularly racial equality as depicted in Sanford and Son, Good Times and The Jeffersons. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Network dominance

- Time has not made broadcast's role moot. Network fare remains dominant for most U.S. consumers despite an explosion of niche cable channels and streaming services that cater to seemingly every possible demographic.
- What viewers see — or fail to see — on the networks has a powerful impact on how individuals regard themselves as part of the cultural mosaic in the U.S.

"We can get pleasantly and romantically drunk by looking at all (Rhimes) is doing ... But at the same time, she's one person at one broadcast network."

Hollywood's commitment to diversity has been an issue on numerous fronts in recent weeks: Not a single Oscar nominee in an acting category is black, and the critically acclaimed Selma got just two Oscar nods for best picture and best original song.

Emails exposed by the Sony Pictures hacking revealed racist jokes referencing President Barack Obama by Amy Pascal, head of that studio's film division. Comic Chris Rock wrote a detailed essay for The Hollywood Reporter saying that entertainment is a white industry, "just as the NBA is a black industry." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Show development

OWN to adapt Queen Sugar as drama series

Oprah Winfrey and the director of the Oscar-nominated movie Selma are creating a drama series for Winfrey's TV channel. The project from Winfrey and filmmaker Ava DuVernay is inspired by the Natalie Baszile novel Queen Sugar, the OWN channel said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oprah GETTY IMAGES

New Harper Lee novel features Scout as an adult

Publishing. To Kill a Mockingbird author will release first work in more than 50 years

To Kill a Mockingbird will not be Harper Lee's only published book after all. Publisher Harper announced Tuesday that Go Set a Watchman, a novel the Pulitzer Prize-winning author completed in the 1950s and put aside, will be released July 14. Rediscovered last fall, Go Set a Watchman is essentially a sequel to To Kill a Mockingbird, although it was finished earlier. The 304-page book will be Lee's second, and the first published work in more than 50 years.

The publisher plans a first printing of two million copies.

"In the mid-1950s, I completed a novel called Go Set a Watchman," the 88-year-old Lee said in a statement issued by Harper. "It features the character known as Scout as an adult woman, and I thought it a pretty decent effort. My editor, who was taken by the flashbacks to Scout's childhood, persuaded me to write a novel (what became To Kill a Mockingbird) from the point of view of the young Scout.

Harper Lee in a 2007 file photo THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

"I was a first-time writer, so I did as I was told. I hadn't realized it (the original book) had survived, so was surprised and delighted when my dear friend and lawyer Tonja Carter discovered it. After much thought and hesitation, I shared it with a handful of people I trust and was pleased to hear that they considered it worthy of publication. I am humbled and amazed that this will now be published after all these years."

Financial terms were not disclosed. The deal was negotiated between Carter and the head of Harper's parent company, Michael Morrison of HarperCollins Publishers.

According to publisher Harper, Carter came upon the manuscript at a "secure location where it had been affixed to an original typescript of To Kill a Mockingbird." The new book is set in Lee's famed Maycomb, Ala., during the mid-1950s, 20 years after To Kill a Mockingbird and roughly contemporaneous with the time that Lee was writing the story. The civil rights movement was taking hold in her home state. The Supreme Court had ruled unanimously in 1954 that segregated schools were unconstitutional, and the arrest of Rosa Parks in 1955 led to the yearlong Montgomery bus boycott.

"Scout (Jean Louise Finch) has returned to Maycomb from New York to visit her father, Atticus," the publisher's announcement reads. "She is forced to grapple with issues both personal and political as she tries to understand her father's attitude toward society, and her own feelings about the place where she was born and spent her childhood." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A TV couple that stays together

Plot. The Mindy Project doesn't take hackneyed will-they-won't-they approach to romance

LISA WEIDENFELD
Metro in Boston

Quoted

"Mindy's a very wild character and she has very strong opinions, but they both just kind of want to make it work."

Mindy Kaling, on her character's onscreen romance with beau Danny

The Mindy Project is attempting something bold for a sitcom: The main couple got together, and stayed together. Many shows take the Ross and Rachel route, and try will-they-won't-they couples before breaking them up (see: New Girl), but so far, Mindy and beau Danny have been working out their differences.

"Mindy's a very wild character and she has very strong opinions, but they both just kind of want to make it work," says show creator and star Mindy Kaling.

"Relationships work because people want to make it work even if they're difficult people. It also just makes them really entertaining."

The duo has faced such challenges as Danny's intensely close relationship with his mother and Mindy getting a little ahead of herself in terms of where their relationship is, but they're now facing their biggest challenge yet. Mindy accepted a fellowship on the West Coast, and they're now making it work long distance.

Asked if the show's writers intentionally decided to focus on Mindy's career now that her love life is relatively stable, Kaling jokes, "Thank you for giving us the credit to know that we've that planned out," then adds, "We just think, 'What's exciting to us?' Mindy had started taking interns under her wing, and I really liked that dynamic. I like when Mindy is bossy, but it's because she's competent, not because she's just being bossy."

Kaling took a little inspiration from her last job when planning out the Stanford arc. "We had an arc in The Office called the Michael Scott Paper Company that was one of my favourite arcs. You don't always see professional ambition in TV characters, so that was really fun to do."

Part of the fun of writing the relationship between Mindy and Danny has been letting co-star Chris Messina shine. "I feel like Chris used to be a straight man for my character in like the first four episodes. More and more, my favourite scenes are the ones where Mindy is like, 'Hey man, are you OK?' Where Mindy's the straight man," says Kaling.

"Chris is so talented. I love that in one episode he can be a complete heartthrob but then also a walking physical comedy set piece. It's awesome."

Kaling points out that part of the characters' commitment to staying together has to do with their age — people in their 30s are a little less likely to break up over frivolous reasons. "The long distance puts a strain on (the relationship), but also it brings out some really interesting and loving sides to them, which has been fun to play."

The show has had some changes in the makeup of the cast, but one recent one has Kaling feeling especially sad: the imminent departure of Adam Pally. Don't expect anyone to jump back in to take his place right away, though.

"We can't really replace Pally. He's so funny and he's so woven into the fabric of the show. Mindy and him are such close friends that we definitely wouldn't want to replace anyone with his energy, which is so rare. It's kind of like incredibly sweet frat boy a—."

Kaling does promise that the office won't just pretend he never worked there, though. "We have a whole thing about replacing the doctor — the hole that he left — so that's going to be a nice arc."

Mindy Kaling CONTRIBUTED

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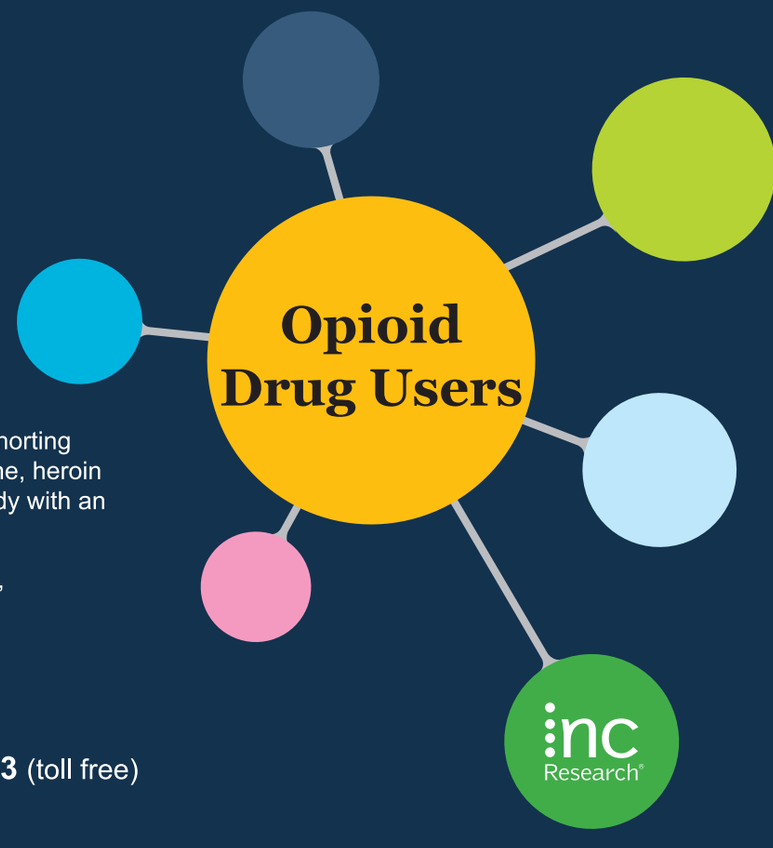


Being voice of SpongeBob is 'best job' in the world

Animated character. Tom Kenny loves his child-friendly voiceover gig as a TV favourite

MATT PRIGGE
Metro in Hollywood

Like SpongeBob SquarePants, the character he's voiced for 17 years, Tom Kenny is happy. "I think I've got the best job — not just in showbiz, but in the world," he tells us. Though his resumé is clogged with animated voiceover work, it's the Nickelodeon staple — now getting its second movie, The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie: Sponge Out of Water — for which he's most recognized. But Kenny also has a history of very non-child-friendly fare, including the legendary sketch comedy show Mr. Show and Shakes the Clown, the 1993 cult comedy by his childhood friend Bobcat Goldthwait. Fun fact: The character he played in the latter — bitter, evil clown Binky — inspired the very good 1996 R.E.M. song Binky the Doormat.

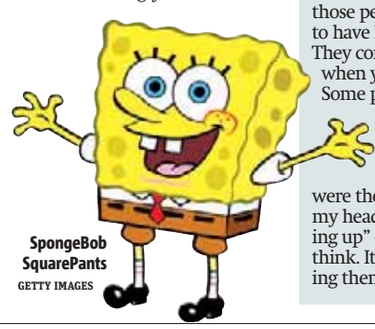
It's interesting that SpongeBob records with the cast altogether in the studio. That's not how most animated shows or movies do voiceover work.

Even if you have a home studio where you're living, it's just not the same as looking through the glass at the creator of the show and having eye contact with him and recording with the other cast members of the show. SpongeBob is one of the few shows that still records ensemble. The way we record is as an ensemble radio show. If everybody is in the scene, those actors are in the booth. I can't picture doing it the way that so many shows — and definitely most animated features — do it, which is an actor by themselves, and then they Frankenstein together a whole bunch of performances by people who have never been in the same room or even met each other. It works, obviously. But I'm always hearing people saying, "This person co-starred with me and I still haven't met them! We were in Finding Nemo together!" With SpongeBob it's an ensemble, the way that Rocky and Bullwinkle was, the way Looney Tunes was. I think it just brings a bit more soul to the whole process.

Tom Kenny is the voice of SpongeBob SquarePants. PARAMOUNT PICTURES

It's kind of amazing the show hasn't changed much over such a long period on air.

The characters are the same as they ever were, which I think is what people like about animation. Bugs Bunny is always Bugs Bunny, Bart Simpson is always Bart Simpson and SpongeBob and Patrick are always SpongeBob and Patrick ... The unchanging-ness of those personas is what gives animation this comfort-food aspect that people love. It's like a comfortable beat-up slipper you can't wait to put on after work because your feet are killing you.



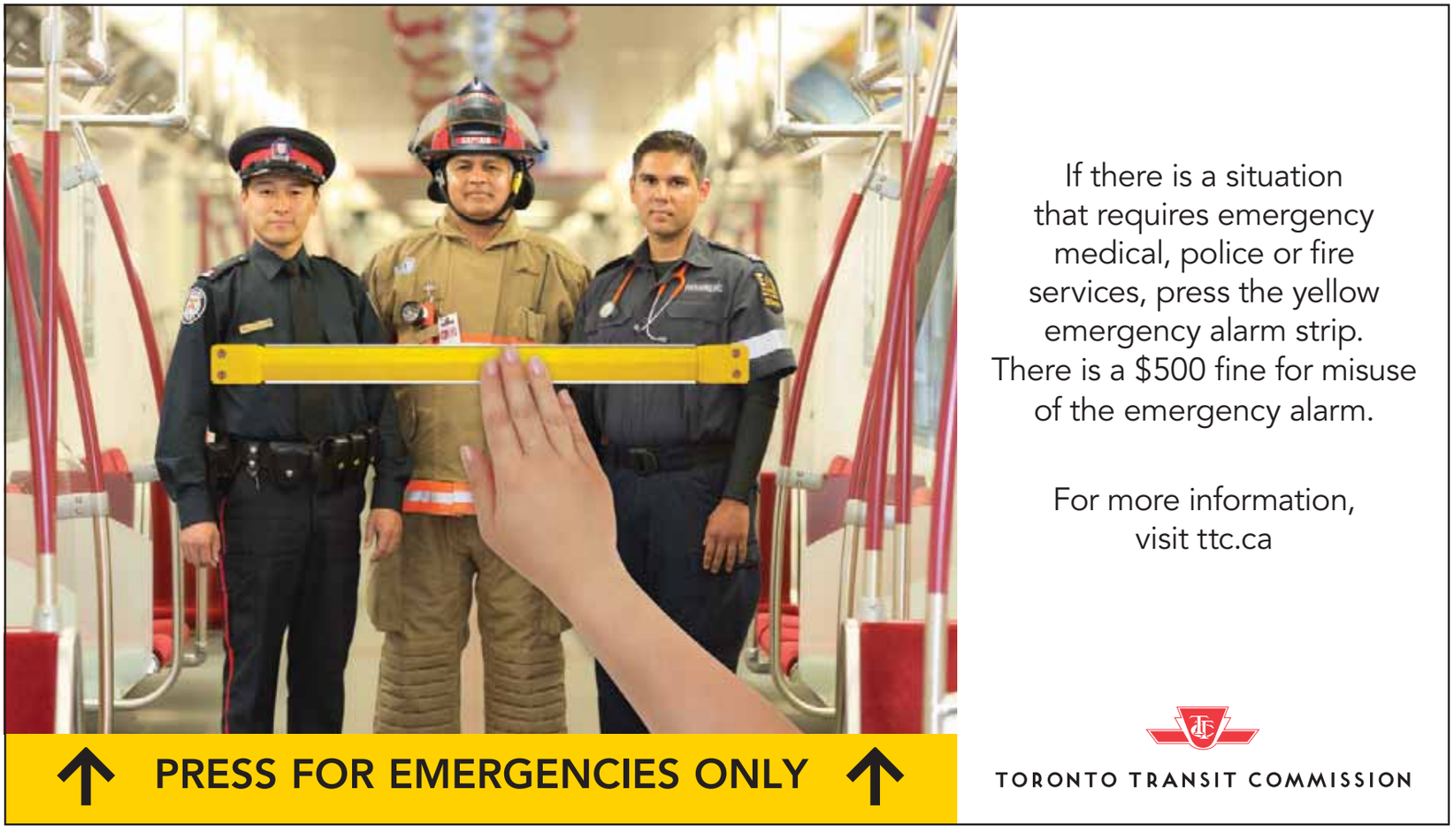
SpongeBob SquarePants GETTY IMAGES

SpongeBob fans

Soaking up the accolades

What kind of feedback have you received from people who've watched it since they were kids and are now young adults?

It's great to be a part of something that takes hold like that in people's lives. It's been 15 years that SpongeBob has been on the air. So if a kid was nine then, he's 24 now. Some of those people are starting to have kids of their own. They come to meet you when you do appearances. Some people want to hug you and say, "Thank you for being the soundtrack to my childhood," or "You were the voice I heard in my head when I was growing up" — in a good way, I think. It's not like I was telling them to kill their dog.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Climbing peaks and dunes

The Southwest. This spring lace up your hiking shoes and head to Arizona and Texas for some challenging and scenic trails

Hikers descend a steep portion of the Camelback Mountain trail. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Endless white sand dunes stretch across the horizon at White Sands National Monument in New Mexico. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In seven parks from Phoenix, Ariz., to near El Paso, Texas, you can wander across blindingly white sand dunes, climb on all fours over red boulders, trek to waterfalls deep inside a canyon, and play rockhound for a day. Here are some highlights not to miss this spring.

Saguaro Forests

Two-storey-high saguaros, ocotillo bushes tipped with scarlet blooms and blossoming palo verde trees border the steeply rising switchbacks on the first two kilometres of the Hugh Norris Trail in the western district of Saguaro National Park.

At the ridge top, falcons soar as dusk settles onto one of the densest concentrations of saguaros in the Sonoran desert, many more than a century old. In the distance stands Signal Hill, where the Hohokam people carved petroglyphs hundreds of years ago.

Although Tucson bisects the park's two districts, silence on the trail is unbroken.

Canyon swim

Deep inside Bear Canyon, seven waterfalls gurgled amid rocky walls studded with cactus. This 13-kilometre round-trip hike in Sabino Canyon Recreation Area, just north of Tucson, is a parade of Southwest wilderness bests: saguaro stands silhouetted against mountain peaks, a cottonwood-lined river gorge, and chilly rock pools, perfect for dipping battered feet.

Rocks all around

Follow I-10 east more than 160 kilometres from Tucson, across desert so wide that the mountains look like they're hanging off a round horizon, like a child's drawing of the Earth. Then head toward the border to either Rock Hound State Park, in Deming, N.M., or Chiricahua National Monument, Ariz.

The park allows visitors to collect up to 15 pounds. The nearby Red Roof Rock Shop can saw them in two — $3 for a half-hour of work — to reveal gorgeous sparkling blue agate nestled against pale violet rhyolite, a type of rock known as a thunderegg.

At Chiricahua, a "sky island" mountain range emerges from the emptiness, its dense formations of eroded volcanic ash spires millions of years old stand like turrets on a sand castle. Starting from Massai Point, 2,094 metres high above the desert, hike down to Echo Canyon Grotto, amid pines and improbably perched rocks that seem ready for a Wile E. Coyote's push.

If you go ...

- **Picacho Peak State Park.** azstateparks.com/Parks/PIPE/
- **Saguaro National Park.** nps.gov/sagu
- **Bear Canyon Trail.** In Sabino Canyon, about 22 kilometres from Tucson, Ariz.
- **Rock Hound State Park.** Near Deming, New Mexico, about 160 kilometres from El Paso, Texas

Snowy sand

Strolling from bright marker to marker across white dunes, the wind obliterates your footprints like you are in a blizzard. But a few tall, spiky yucca plants sprouting from the gypsum sand signalled that this was desert, part of 713 square kilometres of constantly shifting dunes at White Sands National Monument. The remote area sits in the middle of a missile range in southern New Mexico.

Crawling up camelback

One of the most iconic Southwest hikes is smack in the middle of metro Phoenix.

The experience of clambering up the 824-metre Camelback Mountain starts with fighting for a parking spot and ends with the rush of bagging a genuine peak. Hikers use metal handrails in spots to pull themselves up the red rocks, which resemble the face and hump of a camel.

When you aren't climbing on all fours, take in the 360-degree views of distant mountain ranges and closer golf courses and pools, framed by tall saguaros, blooming and fragrant creosote, and orange poppy buds.

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From one side of America to the other

The Norwegian Sun is one of many ships that sail through the Panama Canal. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Panama Canal. This Central American marvel of engineering adds a fascinating element to a cruise

Nina and Fred Fenton have gone on 40 cruises, including five through the Panama Canal since 1998, but they keep coming back.

While aboard the Norwegian Sun on their latest journey into the storied waterway linking two great oceans, the retired couple from Lincoln, Calif., mused at the simple — yet efficient — workings of the century-old engineering wonder.

"This is a true marvel," said Nina Fenton. "It's amazing how they were able to do what they did back when it was built, and it is still functional today," added Fred Fenton.

The Fentons' most recent journey through the Panama Canal was 15-day cruise from Los Angeles to Tampa, Fla., last year. On one sunny fall morning, throngs of passengers leaned on deck railings to watch as the ship slowly edged into a series of canal locks lifting it 26 metres above sea level for entry on the Pacific side and lowered it the same amount as it sailed into the Caribbean Sea at late afternoon.

Twenty-six million gallons of water can flow into a lock in just eight minutes. Gravity fills the locks with water from Miraflores and Gatun lakes, which are located on the continental divide between the locks in this 77-kilometre isthmus.

Electric locomotives attach cables on both sides of ships to ensure they are centred while slowly motoring on their own power through each lock.

"It's a fantastic experience," said Ronny Borg, captain of the Norwegian Sun. "I never get tired of it, and I've been through the canal maybe 20 times."

Borg said the shortcut between oceans, which cost Norwegian Sun a $379,000 transit fee on this trip, saves ships three to four weeks that otherwise would be spent going around the southern tip of South America. As a bonus for passengers, the day-long journey through the Panama Canal is truly fascinating.

"It's amazing that this whole system was envisioned and built more than a century ago and is still working well," said cruise passenger Roger Mathison of Sioux Falls, S.D.

Mathison and his wife, Pat, spent the day taking dozens of canal passage photos from various decks and playing cards near a cafeteria window that offered an excellent view. At one point, they even saw a large crocodile in the water.

Wide load

- The Norwegian Sun is one of the largest boats that can transit the canal, measuring 32 metres at its widest point.

Most major cruise lines and some smaller ones offer lengthy Panama Canal trips from one U.S. coast to the other, primarily in the drier September-April period. Ships on shorter cruises go into the canal, turn around and return to their ports of origin.

As this cruise ship carefully nudged through the locks, passengers had a bird's-eye view of other in-transit vessels in the next lane.

The daylong journey also offered a glimpse of the massive construction project that will add an adjacent third lane of canal traffic, allowing even larger ships to use the shortcut in the future.

Existing locks are 305 metres long, 34 metres wide and 14 metres deep. The new ones will be 427 metres long, 55 metres wide and 18 metres deep. A Panama Canal Authority spokesman said the project should be completed by 2016. Construction of the existing canal was finished on Aug. 15, 1914.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bucket list

Eat your way around Wales

Unspoiled, unhurried and underrated, Wales is one locavore taste sensation after another, one of the earliest champions of simpler food traditions. After you've toured Cardiff, jump in a rental and head to Llanerch Vineyard Cookery School, voted one of the top 10 in the U.K., where Welsh food legend Angela Gray presides over the kitchens. Then, going east to Reynoldston, stop at the Fairyhill Hotel & Restaurant, an eight-room haven that dates back to the 1720s, where the kitchen bends over backward to make the best use of regional food. And if you have time for a trip up north, a true food adventure can be found at Ynyshir Hall, a stately inn near Machynlleth in Powys. While on the road, watch for signs of all the little food fairs during the spring and summer, teeming with amazing cheese, chocolate, cider and meats. Bring stretchy pants. DOUG WALLACE

Break the winter blahs with a trip to Carnaval

Quebec City. This classic frigid fest is the perfect reason to bundle up and head outside

ON THE MOVE
Loren Christie
life@metronews.ca

The Hotel de Glace is North America's only ice hotel. PETER REMUS

For anyone looking to embrace our Canadian winter, there is no better place than Quebec City.

Quebec's Carnaval encourages everyone to bundle up and make the most of the outdoors. This past weekend I visited the city with six friends, in time for the world-famous winter festival's opening weekend. Despite -20 C temperatures, people came out to try their hand at dog sledding, snow biking and grab a photo with Bonhomme, the festival's omnipresent mascot. Most activities take place just outside the old city walls on the Plains of Abraham and are geared toward families. That didn't stop our gang of winter adventurers from taking part in tube and toboggan races. When a diversion from romping in the snow is required, there are a number of pop-up ice bars and wooden shacks ready to serve up a coffee with Amarula or a glass of Caribou, Quebec's version of hot mulled wine. The festival runs till Feb. 15 this year.

Away from the Carnaval sites, an afternoon stroll of the historic streets of Vieux Québec and La Place Royale, with its shops, restaurants and tiered, narrow streets are a must.

Reminiscent of a European village, this UNESCO-protected World Heritage area is even more charming when covered in powdery white snow and lit with twinkling lights than when canopied by summer's leafy greens.

Escaping the winter temperatures provides a guilt-free reason to add frequent stops for meals and libations, whether it be an artisanal coffee or a local craft beer.

For dinner, my travelling companions successfully used Trip Advisor as our guide; Chez Boulay and recently opened Légende are both charming restaurants with contemporary menus that pride themselves on their modern Quebec fare. The unexpected gem for us was Bati Bassak, a delicious and reasonably priced Thai and Cambodian restaurant where you could bring your own wine.

There are a number of hotels that are well positioned to make exploring the city easy. However, spending a night at the Hôtel de Glace, located 15 minutes from the downtown core, is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

North America's only ice hotel is a 44-room hotel, complete with Chapel, Bar and Arctic Spa, made completely out of snow and ice. I am glad I paid attention to the sleeping instructions they sent; at a brisk -32 C, there was no room for error.

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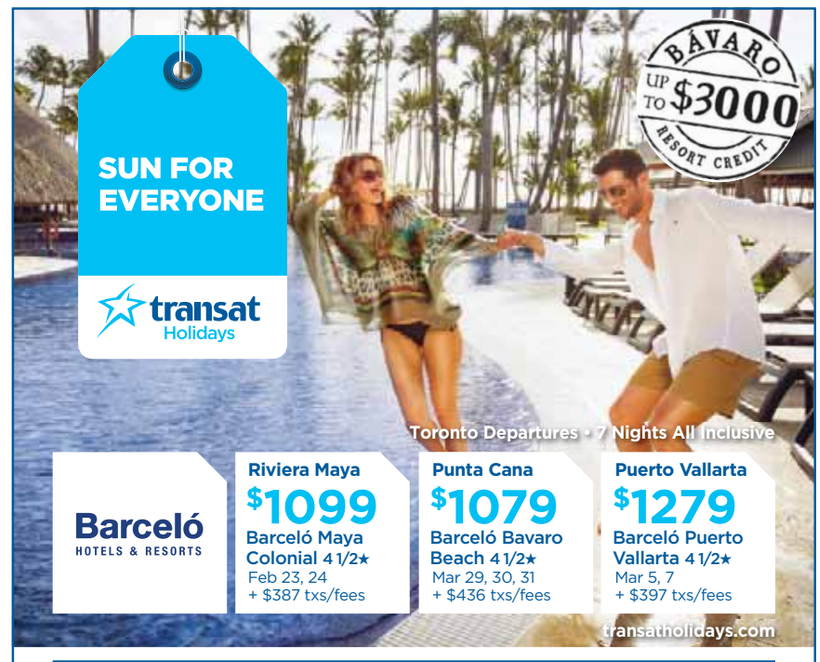

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Beyond the beach

Thrill-seekers travelling to the Dominican Republic have many options from which to choose. CONTRIBUTED

Dominican Republic. A great spot for eco-tourists looking for adventure

VAWN HIMMELSBACH
For Metro

The Dominican Republic is known for its pristine beaches and average annual temperature of 25 C. And its most popular destination, Punta Cana, has been master-planned with vacationers in mind.

While Punta Cana is home to luxury all-inclusives and boutique hotels with colonial charm, there is plenty of action off the resort.

The DR has partnered with the likes of The Nature Conservancy, The Smithsonian and the United Nations to create environmental protections, and much of its coastal areas are protected as national parks and reserves — so it's a great spot for eco-tourists looking to pursue adventure while preserving sensitive ecosystems.

Each winter, some 3,000 to 5,000 whales migrate to Samaná Bay — one of the first whale sanctuaries in the world. Whale-watching tours offer a chance to see humpback whales, which can grow up to 15 metres in length, from January to March.

If it's culture you seek, head to nearby Santo Domingo, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the Caribbean. CONTRIBUTED

On land, head to the Indigenous Eyes Ecological Preserve, a private forest reserve where you can take a dip in one of 12 freshwater lagoons the Taino Indians call "eyes," which are believed to hold medicinal properties.

A new highway is also making it easier — and much faster — to reach other destinations on the island.

"You can take advantage of visiting more than one destination when you choose to go to Punta Cana," said Cosette Garcia, director of tourism for the Dominican Republic in Canada.

"I know how Canadians love to mingle with the locals, so they have that option."

If it's culture you seek, head to nearby Santo Domingo, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the Caribbean. This UNESCO World Heritage Site — where Christopher Columbus first set foot in 1492 — is easily walkable, with colonial architecture, cobblestone lanes and iron street lamps.

No trip to the DR is complete without sun and sand, and Punta Cana's Bavaro Beach is rated one of the world's top 10 beaches (according to UNESCO). With a coral reef that protects the beach from big waves, it's ideal for swimming and safe for kids.

Day and night

- For thrill-seekers, Bavaro Adventure Park offers 1,100 acres of open-air adventure, from ziplining to "crazy ball zorbing" and "crazy jumper bungee trampolines." Or head to Dolphin Island Park, where you can swim with dolphins and sea lions in their natural habitat.
- Dance the night away at Imagine, a disco built into a cave. Be sure to sample the local beer, Presidente. Or try the popular Brugal rum, which is produced in the DR and uses traditional rum-making methods. But take it easy — it's strong stuff.

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A workplace wardrobe that's winning

Career. Nobody wants to be that person who arrives overdressed on their first day — or even worse, underdressed

LAUREN MARINIGH
TalentEgg.ca

You don't necessarily have to be decked out in a suit in order to be considered a working professional. ISTOCK

Starting at a new job always raises a lot of questions — one of the most questions being: "What on earth do I wear?"

Most of the time, the human resources manager can let you know the dress code in advance, but it might be hard to know which outfits in your closet fall under the target category.

What is the difference between business casual and business formal? What is too casual for work? Don't worry — we have the answers to your fashion woes below.

Casual

Step aside, Casual Fridays.

The casual dress code is getting more and more popular today. It's most prevalent in smaller companies, often with a younger demographic.

If your workplace has a casual dress code, the outfits already sitting in your closet will most likely suffice.

But while casual can mean comfort, there are still standards and restrictions for what you can and can't wear in this category. Pants or jeans without holes work well, as well as most shirts that cover the shoulders (no tank tops!). Be sure you have a few go-to pieces: relaxed button up-shirts or blouses are great choices.

There is a lot of freedom with casual dress codes, but make sure you are aware of the rules that are still outlined and don't push it.

Business Casual

This dress code is probably the most confusing to understand. How exactly do you combine business and casual, and how do you make sure you're neither over- nor underdressed?

Business casual usually means that your employer wants a more laidback environment, but still want s everyone to look professional and put together.

For bottoms, khakis, corduroy, or dress pants are usually what fall into business casual. Button-up collared shirts can be worn without a tie, and golf shirts are usually allowed in the warmer months. For sweaters, make sure they fall under a cardigan category as opposed to casual.

The best part of business casual is there are probably a lot of clothes you currently own that you can dress up to be work appropriate.

A top that you may usually wear with jeans may look at lot dressier when worn with dress pants and a nice sweater.

Formal

Formal is the strictest dress code, and each workplace will enforce a different set of rules regarding it.

When it comes to a formal or professional dress code, think about what you would have worn for the interview. This is often the case for an office environment that deals heavily with clients: It's very important to maintain a professional image at all times.

Some workplaces require you to wear a full suit, where other workplaces may say that dress pants or skirts and a collared dress shirt with tie are acceptable.

A button-up collared shirt is always a safe bet.

The most important thing before your first day of work is to ask your human resources manager to describe the dress code in detail.

Some workplaces may have different guidelines for a certain dress code, so it's better to err on the side of caution.

And when in doubt, it's always safer to dress a little more formally.

As you begin to work in the new workplace, you will start to get a better sense of appropriate attire from what everyone else is wearing.

Best bets

1. Don't get too comfortable — steer clear of sweatpants, sweatshirts, and running shoes.
2. Avoid shirts that have inappropriate logos — small logos are fine, but make sure that any graphics on your clothing are not overwhelming.
3. Don't wear revealing clothing — low-cut tops, shorts, and mini-skirts all fall under the fashion faux-pas category.
4. Keep your shoulders covered — no tank tops or spaghetti straps. When in doubt, cover up with a sweater or jacket
5. Think about your shoes — avoid flip-flops or other open-toed shoes.

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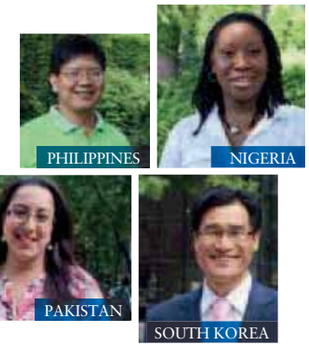

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DINNER EXPRESS
Emily Richards
food@metronews.ca

FLASH FOOD

From your fridge to your table in 30 minutes or less

This recipe serves four to six. ONTARIO TURKEY

Growing up in an Italian family, I have always enjoyed scallopini.

With the great variety on the market, choosing lean turkey scallopini is an easy way to add a fancy factor to your meal routine.

I developed this recipe based on the version my Nonna made when I was growing up. It's easy to put together with big garlic and herb flavour.

Using lean turkey breast scallopini allows you to cook it quickly to enjoy right away or pack away for an awesome lunch tomorrow!

A simple Italian filling of garlic, parsley and cheese fills the turkey scallopini to add flavour to the pasta sauce and makes a homey winter meal.

The pasta sauce aroma filling the kitchen will have your family running to the table.

Be sure to have a chunk of Parmesan to sprinkle over top of the pasta before serving.

Directions

1. Lay scallopini out on work surface. Sprinkle them with pepper and half of the salt.

2. Divide garlic, parsley and cheese between scallopini. Roll up each one and secure with a toothpick or kitchen string.

3. In a deep skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Brown turkey rolls, remove to a plate.

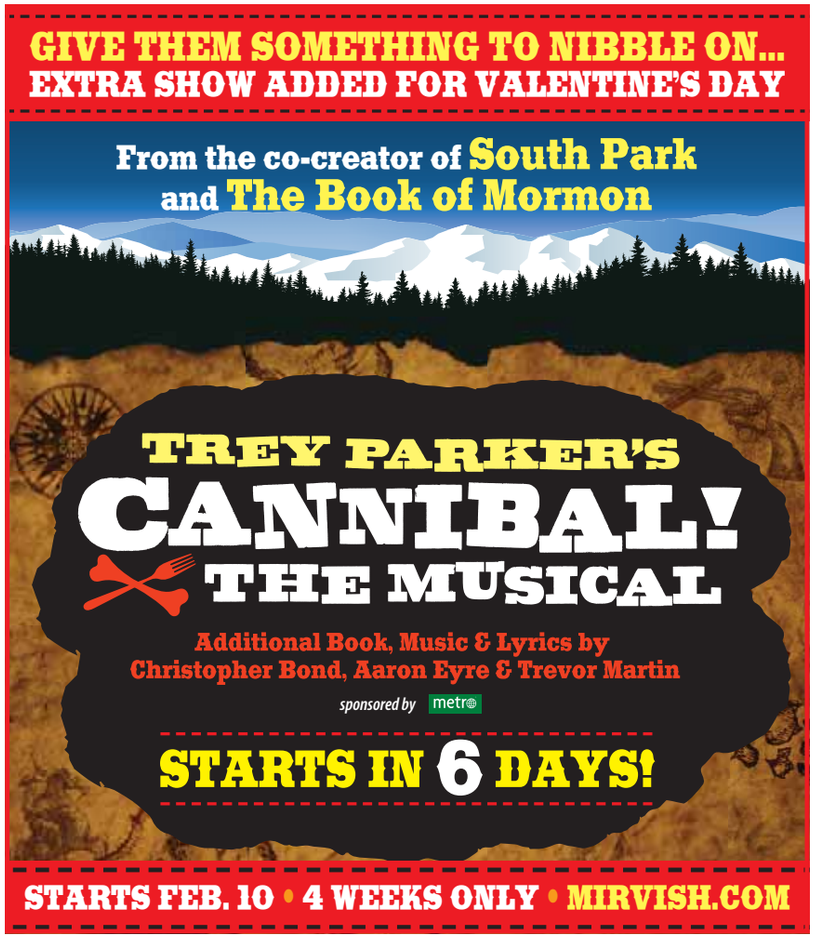
4. Return skillet to medium heat and cook shallots, oregano and hot pepper flakes for 3 minutes or until softened. Add passata, parsley, basil and remaining salt; bring to a simmer. Add turkey rolls and any accumulated juices. Cover and simmer for about 15 minutes or until turkey is tender and no longer pink inside.

5. Meanwhile, in pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta for about 8 minutes or until tender but firm. Drain well and return to pot.

6. Remove turkey rolls from sauce and pour sauce over pasta and toss to combine. Serve with rolls.

Ingredients

- 1 lb (500 g) turkey breast scallopini
- 1/2 tsp (2 ml) ground pepper
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt, divided
- 8 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) chopped fresh parsley
- 1/3 cup (75 ml) fresh grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) extra virgin olive oil
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 tsp (5 ml) dried oregano leaves
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) hot pepper flakes
- 1 jar (660 ml) tomato passata
- 2 sprigs fresh parsley
- 1 sprig fresh basil
- 1 pkg (375 g) whole wheat or gluten free penne pasta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Mixed martial arts

'Spider' tested positive for 'roids

The UFC says former middleweight champion Anderson Silva has tested positive for steroid use.

The promotion announced the results of Silva's test Tuesday night.

Silva tested positive for Drostanolone metabolites in an out-of-competition test Jan. 9, according to the Nevada Athletic Commission. The UFC says the commission is doing further testing to confirm the results. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NFL

Juror dismissed in Hernandez trial

The judge overseeing the murder trial of former New England Patriots player Aaron Hernandez removed a juror Tuesday, saying there was evidence she had spoken about the case in previous years and had an early interest in being seated on the panel.

Bristol County Superior Court Judge Susan Garsh dismissed the juror after questioning her individually and closing the courtroom to hear evidence on the matter. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MLS pre-season

T.O. teen scores two for Toronto FC

Scarborough teenage striker Jordan Hamilton scored twice Tuesday as Toronto FC outscored Montverde Academy 4-2 in a pre-season scrimmage in Orlando. Robbie Findley and rookie Micheal Ramos also scored for TFC. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Speed comes first for Raptors in the fourth

NBA. Valanciunas' minutes shrinking in crunch time when perimeter defence becomes a priority

Highly touted big man Jonas Valanciunas has been left out during a lot of fourth quarters this season as Raptors look to match oppenents' small-ball lineups. HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

As the Raptors mounted a vain attempt at a comeback against the Milwaukee Bucks Monday night, Jonas Valanciunas was in a familiar spot: Sitting on the bench.

Time and again this season, with the game on the line in the fourth quarter and even late in the third, the team's starting centre has been the odd man out. Against the Bucks, Valanciunas didn't play a single minute in the fourth quarter.

It's nothing personal, insists head coach Dwane Casey. Instead, it's a sign that the 22-year-old Lithuanian seven-footer's journey from hot prospect to NBA star isn't yet complete.

"In very basic terms, usually if we're scrambling, double-teaming, trying to get back defensively, trying to play fast, in those situations, JV's not in the game," said Casey at the Air Canada Centre practice court Tuesday.

In Casey's defensive scheme, even the big men need to put pressure on opposing shooters. Against smaller lineups, that means big men with speed. It's simply not something Valanciunas has yet, said Casey.

"We needed to get faster in our rotation and we did that with Tyler (Hansbrough) and Pat (Patterson)," said Casey.

Asked if he's frustrated at the lack of clutch playing time, Valanciunas gave a little shrug and insisted he isn't.

"I'm just doing my stuff. I'm not frustrated. Some nights I play the fourth quarter, some nights I don't.

"It's a different matchup every night," said Valanciunas, admitting he's not quick enough to keep up with smaller players.

"A lot of teams go small on us, so coach is probably trying to match their small players. When they go small they can shoot, so it's hard for me to go out to the three-point line and guard the shooter."

Still, there's time for the relatively young Valanciunas to develop some speed and footwork. Casey is confident it will eventually come.

"He's definitely better this year than the way he was the first couple of years in the league at guarding perimeter guys, staying in front. Is he there yet? No. But ... he's going to get there.

Casey suggested the big man could also benefit from some off-season one-on-one against smaller players and it's advice Valanciunas seems to be taking to heart.

"My goal is to get quicker. It's something I'm supposed to work on in the off-season, in summer. I worked with some running coaches this summer. That helped, but I'm not there yet, so I still need to work more," Valanciunas said.

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Armstrong liable for hit-and-run: Police

Crime. Girlfriend reportedly took the blame initially to save cyclist from scrutiny

Disgraced cyclist Lance Armstrong hit two parked cars after a night of partying in Aspen but agreed to let his longtime girlfriend take the blame to avoid national attention, police reports show.

Aspen police cited Armstrong with failing to report an accident and speeding weeks after the Dec. 28 accident, but only after his girlfriend, Anna Hansen, admitted to lying for him.

Armstrong declined immediate comment, and his attorney, Pamela Mackey, didn't immediately return a call.

Hansen initially told police she had been driving home from an Aspen Art Museum party when she lost control of Armstrong's GMC Yukon on the icy roads, hitting the cars. She said she drove because "Lance had a little bit to drink," according to the reports.

Lance Armstrong GETTY IMAGES FILE

A man who had been renting one of the damaged cars told a police detective that Hansen came running up to his house in high heels, apologizing and promising to pay for the repairs.

"She said, 'I'm Anna, we're the Armstrongs, my husband's Lance, he was just driving maybe too fast around the corner or something,'" the man told police, according to the reports. He called 911 to report a hit-and-run. Hansen and Armstrong left the scene before police arrived.

Detectives later interviewed Hansen, who eventually told them Armstrong was driving, but they had both decided to let her take the blame.

Armstrong is scheduled to appear in court March 17.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Punishment

Failure to report an accident is a misdemeanour punishable by up to 90 days in jail and a fine of between $150 and $300. Driving too fast for conditions is punishable by a fine between $15 and $100.

- Hansen is not charged with a crime.

Man United whips Cambridge

Cambridge's Tom Elliott, left, and Chris Smalling of Manchester United compete for a header on Tuesday in Manchester, England. Man United won 3-0 and advanced to an FA Cup fifth-round match at third-tier Preston. ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

Premier League

Redknapp calls it quits with QPR

Harry Redknapp quit Queens Park Rangers on Tuesday in a sudden move that could signal the end of the charismatic but outspoken manager's Premier League career.

The 67-year-old Redknapp cited impending knee replacement surgery as the reason for unexpectedly relinquishing control of a team facing relegation.

QPR is 19th in the 20-team standings with 45 points still to play for.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NFL

"I had no doubt in the play call. I still don't to this day. I just wish we had made the play."

Seahawks QB Russell Wilson defends the infamous play call that cost the team its second straight Super Bowl. The Patriots won the championship following a game-saving interception.

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OFFICIAL PIZZA OF:

2015 Mazda3 Sport

- **Type.** Five-door, FWD, compact hatchback
- **Engines.** 2.0-litre I4 (215 hp), 2.5-litre I4 (184)
- **Transmissions.** Six-speed manual, six-speed automatic
- **Price.** $17,690 base, $30,490 as tested

Market position

The Mazda3 is a perennial top-five seller in Canada, and Mazda's top model. It is available in three trims (GX, GS, GT), and as sedan or hatchback. It is positioned as a better-looking compact-car alternative that is also more fun to drive.
• Includes Mazda's Sky-Active technologies for better fuel efficiency.

Points

• New-generation Mazda3 was introduced for 2014.
• Voted Best New Compact Car Under $21,000 by the Automotive Journalists Association of Canada.
• A manual transmission can now be paired with the larger 2.5-litre engine.
• Attractive styling formed from Mazda's Kodo 'soul of motion' design language.

The front seats are well sculpted for comfort, but may seem a bit low.

Notable features

• The optional Technology package on the automatic GT includes i-ELOOP regenerative braking, Smart City brake support, auto-levelling headlights, and warning systems for lane departure, rear cross traffic and blind spots.
• The GT is also available with 18-inch alloy wheels, voice-activated navigation, and a heads-up display.

Fun, practical and gorgeous, too

Review. Curvaceous new Mazda3 hatchback is almost as much fun to drive as it is to stand back and admire

MIKE GOETZ
drive@metronews.ca

PHOTOS: MIKE GOETZ

Debuting in 2014, the striking new Mazda3 is a revelation: The hatchback version, known as the Mazda3 Sport, is just as beautiful as the sedan.

The compact hatchback has long delivered a lot of versatility, space and value for its size. Now, Mazda has demonstrated it can be beautiful, too.

The new Sport also offers a great handling package; a modern interior with a full suite of gizmos; and decent get-up-and-go and fuel efficiency.

For 2015, Mazda fixed the one item that irked faithful fans about the new model. It finally made the six-speed manual transmission available with the larger 184-hp 2.4-litre engine. Last year, manual was only available for the 2.0-litre base engine.

A six-speed manual GT ($26,995) was our test model for the week. Add in the special Soul Red Mica paint job ($300), the Luxury package ($1,500) and $1,695 for freight and delivery, and the total price was $30,490.

Now you might be saying, "I could buy a midsize sedan for that much money," and you'd be right. But maybe a premium hatchback is exactly what you're looking for.

Although you can find hatchbacks with bigger power numbers, the quality of power delivery in the GT will keep you satisfied. The excellent throttle response is such that your right foot is always happy and in control, no matter what the conditions.

The overall ride is on the firm side, and contributes to a bit of road noise coming into the cabin. But if you can live with that, the Mazda3 really rewards the driver — few mass-market compacts are this much fun to drive.

Unfortunately, Mazda's best high-tech features are reserved for the automatic-transmission GT model and its exclusive Technology package (four grand more than our test car).

The front seats are well sculpted for comfort, but may sit a bit low for some. The back seats are comfy, too, although the rear passengers and cargo area do feel the pinch of the swoopy new exterior design.

But the Mazda3 Sport GT checks almost every other box for adventurous drivers, and looks very good doing it.

Compare

1 Ford Focus hatch
Base price: $21,364
Fun to drive, cozier back seat.

2 Subaru Impreza hatch
Base price: $22,490
Good all-rounder, and with all-wheel drive.

3 Hyundai Elantra GT
Base price: $20,044
Impressive combination of style and technology.

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[1]Corolla CE: All in lease payment is semi-monthly for 60 months with $1200 down payment. Includes freight and fees, HST extra. [2]All in finance payment is bi-weekly for 84 months, includes freight and fees, HST extra. [3]All in price includes freight and fees, HST extra. [1]Rav4 LE FWD: All in lease payment is semi-monthly for 60 months with $1300 down payment. Includes freight and fees, HST extra. [2]All in finance payment is bi-weekly for 84 months, includes freight and fees, HST extra. [3]All in price includes freight and fees, HST extra.

*[1] Make no payments for 90 days when you purchase finance a new unregistered 2015 Toyota vehicle through Toyota Financial Services Canada. Offer applies on approved credit to retail customers who purchase and take delivery by February 2, 2015. The first monthly payment will be deferred for 60 days (until the 90th day of the contract) and finance contracts will be extended accordingly. Interest charges will not accrue during the first 60 days of the contract. After 60 days, interest starts to accrue and the purchaser will repay principal and interest over the term of the contract.

Innovative seat design has lofty objectives

Driving Force. Modular concept could make rear seats more customizable and much lighter than current designs

JIL MCINTOSH
drive@metronews.ca

Vehicle technology is constantly being improved, and it's far more than just the engines and safety features.

Even seats come under scrutiny, and a new design under development could dramatically change the way car interiors are built. Called a loft seat, its modular construction is unlike anything being produced right now.

"We have seen modular concept designs in the past, and its day has arrived," says Peter Cansfield, principal industrial designer for automotive supplier Johnson Controls, which developed the loft seat. "This gives us the flexibility to meet what the customer wants."

Most seats consist of a metal frame, cushions and a head restraint. These individual units are then bolted to brackets on the vehicle's floor.

In contrast, the loft seat starts with a steel crossbeam that goes from one side of the car to the other. The modular seat components are then attached to it, allowing automakers the potential for a variety of seat configurations.

The company has initially designed the loft seat concept for a luxury sedan, using premium upholstery and a thin cushioning material called Super Resilient Foam, which creates more interior space while still remaining comfortable.

The seatbacks and cushions fold to reveal hidden storage spaces for cargo.

The concept seat also includes a multi-level centre console with a high armrest for comfort, along with wireless device charging, and cupholders that telescope out of the console to hold taller mugs when needed, but can be pushed back down and out of the way when they're not required.

All cars contain steel beams, called crossmembers, that run under the floor to keep the chassis rigid, and to absorb and deflect crash energy in a collision.

The loft seat's support beam works the same way, allowing the automaker to eliminate one of the lower crossmembers. This, plus the modular seat's lighter weight when compared to a traditional seat, can potentially reduce the vehicle's overall weight, which in turn improves fuel economy.

In future, Cansfield says, the seat's support beam could be made out of strong, but even lighter materials, such as aluminum or carbon fibre.

The loft seat could potentially be incorporated into cars within the next five to 10 years but, because it is a structural component, it can't be retrofitted to an existing vehicle.

"It could be any time within the next generation of vehicles," Cansfield says. "You need to be in at the start of the vehicle architecture, and they would have to design the car around this."

Sitting pretty

- Although the loft seat concept was designed for large sedans, it has the potential to be adapted to almost any type of vehicle.
- As with all vehicle seats, the loft seat would have to incorporate seatbelts and meet crash-test standards.
- The company has also developed FreshPer4mance, a coating technology that keeps liquids and dirt from soaking into upholstery fabric.

Quoted

"We have seen modular concept designs in the past, and its day has arrived. This gives us the flexibility to meet what the customer wants."

Peter Cansfield, industrial designer for automotive supplier Johnson Controls

Instead of being bolted to the floor, the loft seats attach to a crossbeam, allowing a variety of configurations . CONTRIBUTED

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Highline model shown

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*Limited time finance purchase offer available through Volkswagen Finance, on approved credit based on a new and unregistered 2015 Tiguan 2.0T Trendline base model with 6-speed manual transmission with base MSRP of $26,600, including $1,610 freight and PDI, financed at 0% APR for 36 months equals 78 bi-weekly payments starting from $292. $2,850 down payment. Cost of borrowing is $0 for a total obligation of $25,550. PPSA fee, license, insurance, registration, any dealer or other charges, options and applicable taxes are extra. **$500 discount on MSRP available on cash purchase, finance or lease of new and unregistered 2015 Tiguan gas models (GLI models excluded). †**Bi-weekly equivalent lease payments of $108 on the Tiguan shown for example purposes only. Actual lease payments start at $238 and must be made monthly, not bi-weekly. Bi-weekly payment amount shown includes $500 bonus.** Limited time lease offer available through Volkswagen Finance, on approved credit, based on a new and unregistered 2015 Tiguan 2.0T Trendline base model with 6-speed manual transmission and base MSRP of $26,600. $1,610 freight and PDI included. 48-month term at 1.9% APR. $3,395 down payment and $290 security deposit due at lease inception. Total lease obligation: $14,819. 64,000-kilometre allowance; charge of $0.15/km for excess kilometres. PPSA fee, license, insurance, registration, any dealer or other charges, options and applicable taxes are extra. ††2015 Volkswagen Tiguan 2.0T 4MOTION® received a 5-star side-crash rating. Government star ratings are part of the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) New Car Assessment Program (safercar.gov). Crash performance was based on a U.S.-equipped vehicle. Some features on that model may be optional or not available in Canada. Dealer may sell or lease for less. Dealer order/trade may be necessary. Offers end March 2, 2015 and are subject to change or cancellation without notice. Model shown: 2015 Tiguan 2.0T Highline R-Line, $41,240. Vehicle may not be exactly as shown. Visit vw.ca or your Volkswagen dealer for details. "Volkswagen", the Volkswagen logo, "Das Auto & Design" and "Tiguan" are registered trademarks of Volkswagen AG. © 2015 Volkswagen Canada.

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Not all buyers will qualify for the lowest APR payment. Lease a 2015 [Fusion S FWD/Fusion Titanium AWD]/[Escape SE FWD 2.5L with Cargo Package/Escape Titanium] with a value of [$22,814/$34,999]/[$26,764/$32,999] (after [$995/$1,0]/[$995/$1,0] down payment or equivalent trade-in and [$500/$500]/[$0/$0] Manufacturer Rebate deducted and including freight and air tax of [$1,700/$1,700]/[$1,750/$1,750]) at [0%/0%]/[0%/0%] APR for up to [48/48]/[48/48] months with an optional buyout of [$9,438/$14,000]/[$11,592/$14,175], monthly payment is [$259/$428]/[$280/$377] (Comparison payments are for reference purposes only and are calculated as follows: the monthly payment is annualized (multiplied by 12) and then divided by the comparison period (26 for bi-weekly and 52 for weekly). For example: ([$259/$428]/[$280/$377] x 12) / 26 bi-weekly periods = [$119/$197]/[$129/$174]), total lease obligation is [$13,427/$20,544]/[$14,435/$18,096], interest cost of leasing is [$0/$0]/[$0/$0] or [0%/0%]/[0%/0%] APR. Offers include freight, air tax, and PPSA but exclude administration and registration fees of up to $799, fuel fill charge of up to $120 and all applicable taxes. Additional payments required for optional features, license, and insurance. All prices are based on Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price. Some conditions and mileage restriction of [64,000 km/64,000 km]/[64,000 km/64,000 km] for [48/48]/[48/48] months applies. Excess kilometrage charges are 12¢ per km for Fiesta, Focus, C-MAX, Fusion and Escape; 16¢ per km for E-Series, Mustang, Taurus, Taurus X, Edge, Flex, Explorer, F-Series, MKS, MKX, MKZ, MKT and Transit Connect; 20¢ per km for Expedition and Navigator, plus applicable taxes. 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Extolling the virtues of the X Factor

From Acura's much-anticipated NSX and Tesla's much-delayed Model X to Lincoln's booming MKX crossover and Jaguar's lustworthy XE sedan, the lowly letter X has suddenly become a major player in the world of automotive nomenclature

MIKE DOJC
drive@metronews.ca

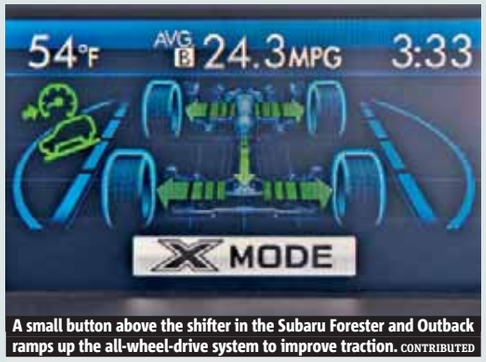
Extraordinary: Subaru X Mode

Body panels made of an indestructible alloy, like the one fused to Wolverine's skeleton that sprout from the X-Man's knuckles when he means business, are a long way off. Ditto for cars able to bend weather to meet our whims, a la Wolvie's teammate Storm.

But vehicles are packing more superpower features lately.

Subaru Forester and Outback drivers can press the special X Mode button above the shifter to amp up AWD engagement and increase traction when confronted with gnarly conditions, such as a steep, unpaved snow-covered road.

And an early X adopter, BMW, dubbed its four-wheel-drive system xDrive 12 years ago.



A small button above the shifter in the Subaru Forester and Outback ramps up the all-wheel-drive system to improve traction. CONTRIBUTED

Exalted: Lincoln MKX

Luxury crossovers have long been infatuated with the letter X, often slipping one into a model's name for added cachet.

Consider the prescription to mid-sized SUV mundanity that is the Lexus RX, or the Cadillac Escalade's little brother, the SRX.

So you just know by the letter's presence that the Oakville-assembled Lincoln MKX has got it going on.

The 2016 model's 19-speaker Revel Ultima system with Quantum-Logic surround sound cocoons drivers in a rolling concert hall.

Lincoln's MKX luxury crossover features a 19-speaker surround-sound stereo system and a 360-degree view from outside the vehicle.

Another top-shelf feature is the 360-degree camera with a cross-traffic-peaking 180-degree split view — taking all the ding worry out of manoeuvring a tight space in the grocery store parking lot.

Experimental: Acura NSX

In 1948, the sound-barrier-busting Bell X-1 was a sheer revelation.

The 2016 Acura NSX (an acronym for New Sports Experimental) has similar "leave 'em breathless" aspirations.

When Tony Stark climbed behind the wheel of the concept version of this Acura beauty in a brief scene at the end of the first Avengers movie, any memory of the Audi R8 featured in the Iron Man movies faded away.

If this twin-turbo V6 gas-electric hybrid supercar (generating more than 550 hp) is good enough for Iron Man to drive, then it's certainly good enough to sit and look pretty in your driveway.

Extreme: Tesla X

SpaceX, Elon Musk's foray into the final frontier, is already the first private company to launch a spacecraft and have it return from orbit.

The company is now working on a reusable rocket, where after separating from a spacecraft, the rocket's first stage will land on a floating drone platform.

X also marks the spot for Tesla, Musk's more grounded company. The oft-delayed Model X, featuring top-hinged folding falcon wing doors for easy step-in access, is set to begin deliveries at the end of the year.

Exhilarating: Jaguar XE

Ravenous automotive writers licked their chops when the come-hither headlights, expressive lines, and sleek contours of the athletic aluminum-bodied Jaguar XE were exposed at the Detroit auto show.

Jaguar's first compact sedan since the soft-selling X-Type is squarely aimed at the same car buyers lustfully eyeing the BMW 3-series and the Audi A4.

It rocks a 3-litre supercharged V6 that generates 340 hp and can go 0-96 km/h in 4.9 seconds.

For sexier fuel economy, there will be an optional diesel version expected to deliver upwards of 5.9 L/100 km.

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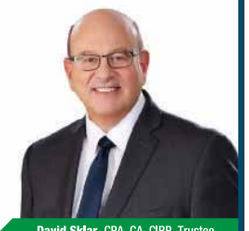
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AUGMENTED REALITY

Stuck on 12 Across? Scan this image with your Metro News app for today's crossword and Sudoku answers. It's OK. No one's watching.

→ See the full instructions on Metro's Voices page.

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Some things can be explained purely by logic but what you have to deal with today will require you to use your intuition. The first explanation that pops into your head is likely to be the right one.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You will take risks purely for the fun of it today. The good news is you will win nine times out of ten, and when you do lose it will only be a minor setback.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You have done plenty of thinking and planning, now you must act. Don't be half-hearted about what needs to be done.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Try things you would not normally attempt today. The results could be spectacular or spectacularly disappointing but that is a risk worth taking.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
The pressure will be on today but that's OK because no one handles it better than you. When the going gets tough the tough get going and one way or another you will go far over the next few days.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You seem to be in two minds about what you should do. That is nothing unusual but today is different because you have to make a quick decision.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
If you start something new today you must expect it to take up a lot more time and energy than you expected. It means you'll have less time and energy to waste on trivial things.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You may not want to do what a friend wants you to do today but if you are smart you will go along with their plans. A few days from now the roles will be reversed and you will be the one in need of support.

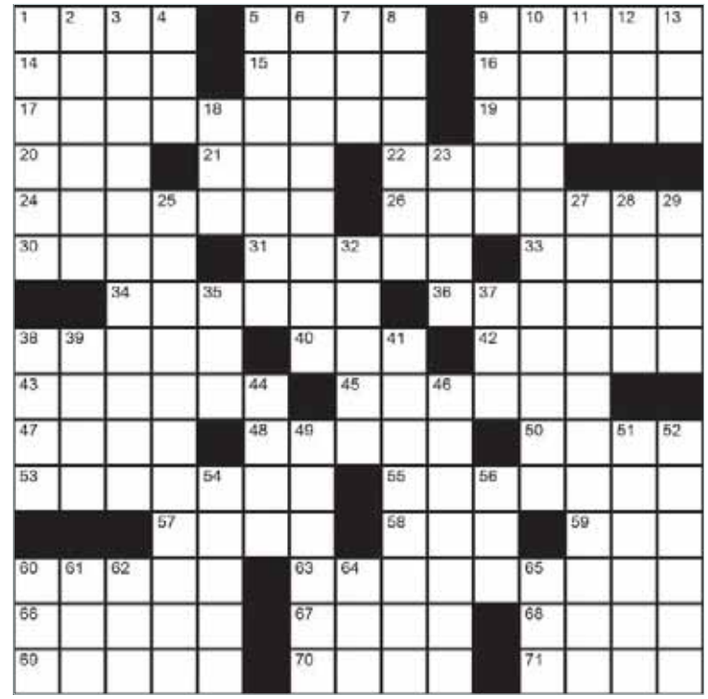
♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Life is too short to worry about what other people think of you, so follow your desires come what may. You have played by the book far too often of late.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Do not allow yourself to get dragged into a dispute between friends or colleagues. Even if you get involved out of good intentions you are likely to make an enemy.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You are in a determined mood and anyone who thinks they are tough enough to take you on is making a big mistake.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
The only thing you're interested in now is the truth and you will do whatever it takes to get it. Maybe that is why certain people look so worried.

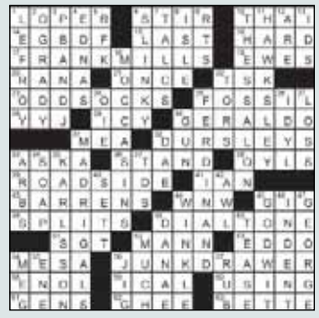
Crossword: Canada Across and Down by Kelly Ann Buchanan



Across
1. Puppy's fun move
5. Theatre award
9. Artificial sweetener brand
14. Miss
15. The __ Shoe Museum, in Toronto
16. Director Sidney
17. Real life Montreal lunch counter in The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz
19. Main meanings
20. __ Young Band
21. Shoe width size
22. Manitoba: West-of-Winnipeg town
24. Stretches
26. Alberta town; or, British car
30. King __ (Shakespeare tragedy)
31. Uncle __ (Anton Chekhov play)
33. Non-meat-eater's org.
34. In a fine way
36. Atomic Number 16
38. Type of headscarf
40. 'Ether' suffix
42. __-A (Skincare product)
43. Complainer
45. Canadian food retailer
47. Atkins = Low-__ diet
48. "_ __ it my all."
50. Commands to attack dogs
53. Posh cues game
55. Devoured: 2 wds.
57. "Are ___ longer a couple?" (What's our status?)
58. Traveller's wee way
59. Mop & __ (Floor cleaner)
60. Sci-Fi weapon, __ ray gun
63. Religious region in the South in the USA: 2 wds.
66. Cross with: 2 wds.
67. "...friend or _ __?"
68. Rocker Mr. Michaels
69. Wheat __ (Nabisco crackers)
70. Nobleman's negatives
71. "Woodstock" gr.

Down
1. Flourish: 2 wds.
2. One of The Dionne Quintuplets
3. The Snows of __ (Ernest Hemingway story)
4. Summer: French
5. Closely watch
6. Pies and cookies event: 2 wds.
7. 'Human' suffix
8. Slip past: 2 wds.
9. Port __, Ontario
10. Library request: 2 wds.
11. Speech-maker's stumbles
12. At the age of, in Latin [abbr.]
13. Some officers, briefly
18. Social pages word
23. Ms. Thompson's
25. Mayor of Winnipeg: 2 wds.
27. Some hockey forwards: 2 wds.
28. Lovely kit
29. Knitting supply
32. Antelope variety
35. UK honour [acronym]
37. Website
38. RCN ship designation
39. Mr. Gruffudd
41. "Turn Me Loose" Canadian band
44. Nothing: French
46. Fab Four
49. Josh of song
51. Canadian actor Sean
52. Uneven
54. Odes-creator John
56. Putter's peg
60. Intl. clock standard
61. Ooh and __
62. Gladiator's 1501
64. "... __ _ woodchuck could..."
65. Cable channel, _ _ _ Canada

Yesterday's Crossword

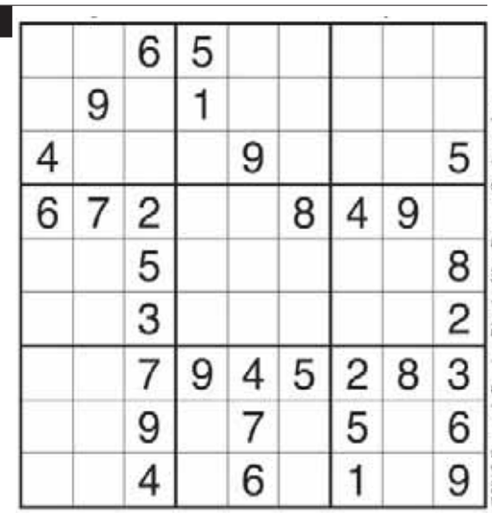


Online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



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Yesterday's Sudoku

9	5	6	1	8	2	3	7	4
8	4	1	7	3	5	2	6	9
3	7	2	6	4	9	8	5	1
1	8	3	2	7	4	5	9	6
4	2	5	9	6	1	7	8	3
7	6	9	3	5	8	4	1	2
2	9	4	8	1	7	6	3	5
5	3	7	4	9	6	1	2	8
6	1	8	5	2	3	9	4	7

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"Half Price Payments"[2] for up to one year available on financing offers only on 2015 Rio/Forte/Optima/Rondo/Sorento models

Rio4 SX with Navigation shown[3]
Cash purchase price $22,514
HWY / CITY 100KM[4] : 5.3L/7.3L

2015 RIO LX MT

from $21 weekly for 69 payments | 0% financing for up to 84 months | $0 down payment[5]

$21 weekly payment includes $1,500 Half Price Payments Credit. Payments based on 2015 Rio LX MT (RIO541F) 84-month financing. After 69 weekly payments at $21, weekly payments increase to $43[6]. Half Price Payments Credit may alternatively be taken as a one time lump sum payment.[7] Excludes HST.

Forte SX AT shown[8]
Cash purchase price $26,814
HWY / CITY 100KM[4] : 5.3L/8.0L

2015 FORTE LX MT

from $24 weekly for 62 payments | 0% financing for up to 84 months | $0 down payment[5]

$24 weekly payment includes $1,500 Half Price Payments Credit. Payments based on 2015 Forte LX MT (FO541F) 84-month financing. After 62 weekly payments at $24, weekly payments increase to $48[9]. Half Price Payments Credit may alternatively be taken as a one time lump sum payment.[7] Excludes HST.

Optima SX Turbo shown[3]
Cash purchase price $33,514
HWY / CITY 100KM[4] : 5.7L/8.9L

2015 OPTIMA LX AT

from $36 weekly for 28 payments | 0% financing for up to 84 months | $0 down payment[5]

$36 weekly payment includes $1,000 Half Price Payments Credit. Payments based on 2015 Optima LX AT (OP742F) 84-month financing. After 28 weekly payments at $36, weekly payments increase to $73[10]. Half Price Payments Credit may alternatively be taken as a one time lump sum payment.[7] Excludes HST.

Sorento SX AT AWD 7-Seat shown[8]
Cash purchase price $38,094
HWY / CITY 100KM[4] : 9.0L/12.7L

2015 SORENTO LX AT

from $39 weekly for 50 payments | 0% financing for up to 84 months | $0 down payment[5]

$39 weekly payment includes $2,000 Half Price Payments Credit. Payments based on 2015 Sorento LX AT (SR75BF) 84-month financing. After 50 weekly payments at $39, weekly payments increase to $79[11]. Half Price Payments Credit may alternatively be taken as a one time lump sum payment.[7] Excludes HST.

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Offer(s) available on select new 2015 models through participating dealers to qualified retail customers who take delivery from February 3rd to March 2nd, 2015. Dealers may sell or lease for less. Some conditions apply. See dealer for complete details. Vehicles shown may include optional accessories and upgrades available at extra cost. All offers are subject to change without notice. All pricing includes delivery and destination fees up to $1,665, $5 OMVIC fee, $429 tire tax, other taxes, environmental fee, and $600 A/C charge (where applicable). Excludes licensing, registration, insurance, variable dealer administration fees (up to $395), fuel-fill charges up to $100, and down payment (if applicable and unless otherwise specified). Other lease and financing options also available. [1] Up to **"Half Price Payments"** for up to one year ("Offer") is only applicable on financing offers on 2015 Rio/Forte/Optima/Sorento/Rondo models. On approved credit, from a participating dealer in Canada between February 3rd to March 2nd, 2015. The Offer consists of a loan credit (Up to "Half Price Payments Credit") that will range from $500 to $3,250 depending on model/trim. Customers can choose to take the full amount of the applicable Half Price Payments Credit as a one (1) time incentive that will be deducted from the negotiated price of the vehicle before taxes. Alternatively, customers can choose the up to "Half Price Payments" option and have their financing payments reduced (before taxes) by 50% until such time as the entire amount of the applicable Half Price Payments Credit has been exhausted. This may take between 10 weeks and 64 weeks depending on model/trim and the amount of the applicable Half Price Payments Credit. After the entire amount of the applicable Half Price Payments Credit has been exhausted, the customer will be required to pay the full amount of all regularly scheduled finance payments over the remaining term of the contract. Vehicle trade-in amounts and down payments are not calculated in the advertised up to "Half Price Payments". See dealer for complete details. [2] **Representative financing example:** 0% financing offer for up to 84 months available to qualified retail customers on approved credit for the new 2015 Rio LX MT (RIO541F)/2015 Forte LX MT (FO541F)/2015 Optima LX AT (OP742F)/2015 Sorento LX AT (SR75BF) with a purchase price of $15,624/$31,514/$26,464/$28,794 financed at 0% for 84-month period with $0 down payment equals 69/62/28/50 reduced weekly payments of $21/$24/$36/$39 followed by weekly payments of $43/$48/$73/$79. Cost includes delivery and destination fees of up to $1,665, $5 OMVIC fee, tire tax of $29, $100 A/C charge (where applicable). Includes $1,500/$1,500/$1,000/$2,000 "Half Price Payments" credit. Cost of borrowing is $0 and total obligation is $14,514/$16,014/$25,577/$25,794. "Half Price Payment" incentive varies by model and trim level and may be taken as a lump sum or to reduce the financed amount. Offer ends March 2nd, 2015. Model shown Manufacturer Suggested Retail Price for 2015 Forte SX (FO548F)/2015 Rio4 SX with Navigation (RIO489)/2015 Sorento LX V6 AWD (SR75AF)/2015 Optima SX Turbo AT (OP748F) is $26,695/$22,995/$42,095/$34,895. [3] Highway/Utility fuel consumption is based on the 2015 Rio SX+ (GD MT)/2015 Forte LX6 MPI 4-cyl MT/2015 Sorento LX 2.4L GDI 4-cyl AT/2015 Optima 2.4L GDI AT. These updated estimates are based on the Government of Canada's approved criteria and testing methods. Refer to the *Fuelguide Fuel Consumption Guide*. Your actual fuel consumption will vary based on driving habits and other factors. [4] $4,000 Winter Edition bonus amounts are offered on select 2015 Winter Edition models and are deducted from the negotiated purchase price before taxes. Available on financing offers only, certain conditions apply. $1,000 Winter Edition Bonus amount available on the 2015 Rondo LX AT (5-seat) Winter SE (RN75SE), 2015 Rondo LX AT (7-seat) Winter SE (RN75FE) and 2015 Optima LX AT Winter SE (OP748F). Information in this advertisement is believed to be accurate at the time of printing. For more information on our 5-year warranty coverage, visit kia.ca or call us at 1-877-542-2886. Kia is a trademark of Kia Motors Corporation.